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EDITORIAL NOTES

1988 — A YEAR OF CONTINUED ADVANCE

At the beginning of 1988 in the annual January 8th speech, President O.R. Tambo described the situation in South Africa as one in which the popular masses still held the strategic political initiative. Despite the two states of emergency, mass detentions, the assassination of ANC cadres and other patriots, the army occupation of townships, schools and campuses, vigilante attacks, and the general implementation of the National Security Management System, the regime remained in deep crisis. The racists had been unable to reverse, in any fundamental way, the gains made by the liberation movement in the preceding years.

President Tambo's sober but optimistic analysis, representing the collective assessment of the leadership of the ANC, was not shared by some academic and media commentators. In a number of news and political journals a series of observers, including many who had been more or less favourably impressed by the upsurge of struggle in the 1984-5 period, were now arguing that the situation had changed dramatically, that the regime had successfully smashed the rising tide of struggle. They called for a 'new realism', for a complete reassessment of the liberation movement's strategies. Some of these commentators suggested that participation in the regime's puppet structures was the most feasible avenue for advance.

These voices came from a range of political positions, both liberal and ultra-left. Some even seemed to be quite pleased with their pessimistic assessment; thus Neville Alexander:

> "As far back as 1983 we in the National Forum were warning that the present government was in no way interested in negotiations (Alexander falsely attributes this claim to the UDF and ANC — ed.). The more pressure placed on it, the more firmly it will tighten the repressive screws." (*Die Suid Afrikaan,* February 1988 pp.26-27)

We are left wondering if this means that revolutionaries must now apply no pressure on the regime at all? Or, perhaps, just a little pressure, but not enough to anger the racists?

Others, like Sarakinsky (also of ultra-left persuasion) elevated this defeatism into a veritable theory of the state:

> ". . . the state determines the arena in which extra-parliamentary opposition operates . . . There is no reason for the state to negotiate in good faith unless national and community-based organisations have institutionalised bargaining power through their strategic intervention in state structures. This could be done by, for example, putting candidates forward for tri-cameral and local authority elections. To negotiate without an institutionalised or any other power base means negotiations occur directly on the state's terrain." (*Work in Progress* No.52, March 1988, p.51.)

The introduction of the phrase "or any other power base" rescues the last sentence, at least if it is considered on its own. But in the quoted sentences that precede it, Sarakinsky is making the astounding claim that there can be no power base other than one institutionalised by the state.

In searching for the underlying root of much of this pessimism that has welled up in the last period in some quarters, you would not be far wrong in turning to Lenin's phrase about the "half-heartedness, vacillation and indecision of the intermediate classes." (*Two Tactics of Social Democracy*).

But it is not enough, of course, simply to dismiss this pessimism on the basis of a few very targettable (if revealing) quotations. We need to consider the built-in assumptions that underlie it. While being more evident, perhaps, in the commentaries of those who, from the fringes, have long adopted a critical stance to the liberation movement, some of these assumptions have a broader influence.

False assumptions

One prominent assumption underlying much of the pessimism about the present period is a completely inaccurate portrayal of the immediately preceding years. The 'new realists' often suggest that the strategic outlook of the ANC and the broader national liberation movement in the 1984-5 period was one of immediate seizure of power, or of imminent negotiations. However, even a superficial consideration of the official organs of the ANC-led revolutionary alliance confirms that this overestimation of the revolutionary situation was never the perspective of the alliance. It was a position attributed to us by the very commentators who are now criticising us for it.

It is true that we held, and still hold, that a revolutionary situation can develop very rapidly out of a sudden combination of events that might be difficult to predict. While charting its course on the basis of the most probable lines of development, any serious revolutionary organisation should also be prepared for a rapid change of fortunes — for better or worse. This point was certainly emphasised in our official organs.

It is also true that in the heat of battle there were some militants, newly drawn into mass struggle, whose outstanding heroism was not always matched by a strategic grasp of the realities of our situation. This is entirely inevitable in any surge of mass mobilisation. The correct approach to this is, incidentally, not to slow down the mobilisation until everyone has read the revolutionary classics. It is mainly in active struggle itself that the broad masses learn their politics. Given the scale and rapidity of mobilisation achieved in the mid-1980's, it was inevitable that there would be some unrealistic slogans in use, like 'No education before liberation'. The apartheid regime, the PFP, and some ultra-left intellectuals were all equally eager to attribute this particular slogan to the ANC-led liberation alliance, using it as evidence of revolutionary naivete. In fact, it was never advanced by the liberation movement, and the ANC and the major mass democractic organs (UDF and NECC) played a leading role in directing the militancy of our students along more strategic lines.

This kind of false attribution of an overly optimistic, short-term revolutionary perspective is typically made by those outside, or on the fringes of our mass struggle, by those for whom the task of liberating our country is primarily a matter of discussion and debate. It should not, perhaps, be surprising that they find it hard to believe that millions of South Africans are prepared to make enormous sacrifices without the promise of immediate success, let alone personal reward. From within the limitations of a purely academic perspective, the great wave of mass struggles in the mid-1980's can, perhaps, only be explained by attributing some short-term, naive optimism either to the participants or to the leading organisations of the liberation movement.

All-round struggle

Another characteristic failure in perspective underlying the 'new realism' is the failure to assess the struggle in its entirety. Instead there is a tendency to focus narrowly, both in time and in regard to the various fronts of struggle. So the period since 1986 tends only to be compared against the backdrop of the 1984-5 period, instead of locating it within the broader period of time that runs back to the mid-1970's and the opening up of the present general, all-round crisis of the apartheid regime. So, too, there is a tendency to isolate specific strategies and sites of struggle — the armed struggle, or sanctions, or the mass democratic front — assessing each in isolation. This piecemeal and disconnected approach reinforces the tendencies to vacillation and pessimism. In assessing any period it is crucial to consider always the overall situation, each aspect in its relation to the others.

It is also important to understand that history develops unevenly and in an often contradictory way. In mass struggle, for instance, it is not possible to maintain the same level of intensity for years at a time. There will inevitably be fluctuations. Our main task is to ensure that we do not just mark time in the same place. Each wave of mass struggle must carry us forward. In each period of relative slowing down we must ensure that the gains are not lost, that the lessons of the previous waves are learned.

There are times when a period of unstable equilibrium might set in. In such a situation it is crucial to maintain all-round pressure against the enemy. Even on a front of struggle where there appears to be no prospect of immediate advance, relaxing allows the enemy to relieve pressure on another more threatening front for itself.

At different times, the weakest link in the enemy's defences might occur at different points, or, to put another way, the sharpest cutting edge of our struggle may shift to a different front. The year 1988 has underlined all of these points clearly. The years 1984-5 were particularly marked by the dramatic upsurge on the mass democratic front in South Africa and the emergence of rudimentary organs of popular power. In 1988 the most significant features have been the breakthrough in the balance of military power in southern Angola, and the rapid development of mass democratic organisation within Namibia.

But it would be quite wrong to imagine that these shifts occurred independently, or in the total absence of substantial and continued activity on other fronts. 1988 has been the year of the June 6-8th stayaway, the longest and largest stayaway in our history. It has been a year of mass rejection of Botha's local elections. It has also been a year in which the world celebrated Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday and in which there was universal disgust at a regime that allows such an outstanding leader to contract tuberculosis and still refuses his unconditional release. All of these events have underlined the deepening political isolation and crisis of the apartheid regime.

The events of 1988 have confirmed the absolute correctness of President Tambo's analysis made at the very beginning of the year. While we must never allow optimism to shut out an honest and self-critical assessment of the enemy's strengths and of our own weaknesses and errors, we cannot allow defeatism to delay us at a time when the continued, all-round offensive against apartheid is the order of the day.

SHARE OFFERS TO WORKERS

One important result of the nationwide struggles that have shaken our country over the last 10 years has been a broadening awareness of the linkages between national oppression and the capitalist system in South Africa. In the last few years support for socialism has begun to acquire a mass character as increasing numbers of our people become aware that the fullest realisation of our national democratic goals will require an uninterrupted transition to socialism.

It is precisely such an awareness that strikes fear in the hearts of South Africa's capitalist class and their imperialist allies. Increasingly the ruling class is being compelled to engage actively in what Bobby Godsell, Anglo American Corporation's labour relations spokesman, describes as "the evolving debate in South Africa about capitalism and socialism". Amongst other things the capitalists have been at great pains to exonerate themselves from any responsibility for racial oppression. They are terrified lest capitalism itself is swept away by the momentum of popular mobilisation in the national revolutionary struggle.

In this idealogical battle one tactic attempted by South African capitalists is the offer of shares to workers. It is a scheme designed, in the words of

Gavin Relly, chairman of Anglo American, "to enable people who mostly have not had the opportunity to accumulate even modest wealth in the past, to obtain a tangible stake in the free enterprise system." In other words, Relly hopes to convince South African workers that they have a stake in capitalism — a system Relly describes as 'free enterprise' (which is ironical considering he is chairman of a company whose handful of directors effectively hold monopoly control over fully one half of the South African economy's private sector).

Britain and US

In offering shares to workers, South African bosses are following a strategy developed in recent years in both Britain and the United States. In Britain the number of small individual shareholders has doubled over recent years, reaching 8 million. This extension of shareholding has taken a distinct form in that country, where it has most notably been linked into the privatisation of formerly nationalised industries like British Telecom, British Airways and the British Gas Corporation. Thatcher's Conservative government claims this as a step forward for 'people's capitalism', presenting the extension of shareholding as if millions of working class shareholders now had a real ownership of and control over the big companies.

Of course the reality is very different. The bulk of shareholding in Britain is still controlled by the existing capitalist financial institutions, and the structure of wealth concentration has remained essentially unchanged. The top 1% of British shareholders own 54% of shares, and the top 5% as much as 80%. The increase in the number of small shareholders in Britain does not even begin to touch the massive class inequalities of that country; in fact it has gone hand in hand with a widening gap between rich and poor, with an assault on the trade unions, and a general dismantling of the welfare state including the National Health Service.

In the United States the number of workers covered in various profit-sharing plans, including share ownerships, has risen from 1 to 10% since 1980. But here, too, the top 1% of shareholders own 50% of shares and the top 6% own 80%. Share offers to US workers have occurred significantly in cases of companies that are under threat of bankruptcy — Chrysler and Eastern, PanAm and Republic Airlines. The money paid by workers to purchase the shares is used to save these firms from bankruptcy. In negotiating employee share ownership, workers have had to agree to wage cuts or restraints. For instance, in return for 35 million US dollars in shares, 23 000 unionised employees of PanAm suffered a 10% wage cut and a 15 month pay freeze.

In all of these cases the intended effect is to give workers a bogus sense of joint control over the companies concerned and to tie more directly the workers' remuneration to their active participation in their own exploitation. The longer term strategic goal is to blunt workers' collective class struggle, by encouraging them to think of themselves as so many individual shareholders, rather than as an exploited class locked in irreconcilable struggle with capital for ultimate control over the major means of production. Ronald Reagan has made this strategic objective abundantly clear: "Could there be a better answer to the stupidity of Karl Marx than millions of workers individually sharing in the means of production?" To which Ben Fine, a British communist and economist has provided the appropriate reply: "Could there be a better answer to the stupidity of President Reagan than millions of workers collectively controlling and planning the means of production under socialism?" (*World Marxist Review,* no. 2, 1988, p.133).

Anglo and De Beers share offers

In South Africa there have been a number of share offer schemes, the most notable being those of Anglo American and De Beers Consolidated. Here the share offer schemes are occurring in a situation of much sharper crisis for capitalism, but the essential strategy is the same — it is an attempt to deflect workers' collective struggles and just demands. In the words of Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, these share offers are "political and economic blackmail" used "to seduce workers away from socialism".

Anglo and De Beers are offering to give each worker employed by them, with two or more years service, shares in their companies. Anglo workers get five shares and De Beers workers ten. The shares are held for four years by trustees on the workers' behalf. They receive dividends but cannot sell the shares for four years.

The mine bosses claim they are giving workers a real stake in their companies. Is this true? Let us consider the Anglo case. Even if all 250 000 Anglo employees entitled to the shares offer were to take them up, the company would still remain decisively in the hands of the present owners and the managers they have appointed. For every 100 shares owened by the present shareholders, less than one full share (0.7) would be held by the hundreds of thousands of workers. If it came to a vote on any company policy the present owners would outvote the workers by more than 99 to 1 — this in spite of the fact that the 99 votes would represent a tiny minority of individual shareholders, virtually all of whom are white. It is obvious that the Anglo offer is more undemocratic and more fraudulent than even PW Botha's various 'power sharing' schemes on the political front.

Nonetheless, these few crumbs are meant to convince workers of the benefits of capitalism. According to Godsell, "The central principle is to give employees the opportunity, if they wish, to experience investment — using money to create more money, as opposed to money as a reward or a form of consumption." Godsell is echoed by his chairman Relly, who claims that the share offer will "enable employees to become involved in the process of wealth creation."

Godsell and Relly speak with the supreme smugness of the rich. Only those who have never done a day's hard labour in their lives could imagine that money creates money, or that workers have no experience of wealth creation! During the great mineworkers' strike of 1987 why was it that Relly's money suddenly stopped creating more money? One hundred and forty years ago Marx and Engels uncovered the secret of capitalism's 'money making money'. They demonstrated thoroughly that money without labour does nothing at all. The profits of the mine bosses are only made from the hard and dangerous work done by exploited workers down the mines. Work is the workers' investment which has cost many of them their very lives.

Let us not allow these share schemes to turn workers away from the struggle for a living wage, for which a few shares are no substitute. We must work to strengthen COSATU and SACTU; workers must confront capitalism, not as millions of individual shareholders, but as a unified class force. We must also take up the ideological challenge posed by the share schemes. Just as Botha's fraudulent tricameral parliament and the recent October local elections indicate, in a corrupted form, that the question of political power is on the agenda, so these share schemes underline that there is also another question on the agenda, that is the question of ownership and control over the major means of production in our country. In addressing this second question, let us be absolutely clear that our aspirations are not for a few shares, but the fullest return on the investment in hard labour that millions of workers over the decades have made to the building of our economy. In the words of the Freedom Charter: "The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people. The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole."

PRISONERS OF WAR

The demand that captured fighters of the national liberation movement should be treated as prisoners of war has been on the agenda for a long time. The question was raised by the movement itself in the 1960's and was taken up by a number of sympathetic governments and international organisations.

The international treaty governing the question at that time was the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 1949, to which South Africa was a signatory. The 1949 convention contains provision for internal as well as international conflicts. Unfortunately, however, its provision regarding internal conflicts is ambiguous and its applicability to the South African situation can be disputed. The need for clearer rules was therefore recognised both by the United Nations General Assembly and by the International Committee of the Red Cross. In 1973 the General Assembly resolved that the 1949 convention ought to apply to persons engaged in armed struggles against racist regimes. At this point the Red Cross had already opened negotiations on the matter. The ANC and SWAPO took part in these negotiations, which concluded in 1977 with the adoption of Protocols to the 1949 convention.

Protocol I is specifically designed to ensure that prisoner of war status is extended to fighters in armed conflicts against racist regimes. National liberation movements can become signatories to the convention and the ANC has done so. There is therefore no doubt that in terms of Protocol I, persons organised for guerrilla activity under the control of Umkhonto we Sizwe are combatants who are entitled to the status of prisoners of war if captured. To torture or execute them is a war crime.

The Pretoria regime has refused to sign Protocol I and blatantly contravenes its provisions every time a freedom fighter is arrested. This is not done in ignorance. The claim for prisoner of war status has been raised in the South African courts by lawyers defending freedom fighters. Both the government and its supporters among the legal profession are aware of the controversial nature of the policy which they pursue. In a recent issue of the right-wing magazine *Strategic Review for Southern Africa,* Professor H. Booysen of the University of South Africa devotes fourteen pages to an elaborate attempt to argue his way out of the rules of Protocol I. He places much emphasis, of course, on the fact that South Africa has not signed the Protocol. Here he is relying on the most primitive view of international law — the view which was current in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when people were just beginning to replace the medieval, religion-based concepts of international law by a modern, secular system. According to that view international law, for any given state, is what the government of that state says it is. There is no way in which a rule can become binding on the absolutely sovereign national state except by its voluntary acceptance of the rule.

Few international lawyers regard that view as tenable in the era of the United Nations Charter. Rules which have received general acceptance by the international community are binding even on governments which do not wish to observe them.

Another proposition on which Professor Booysen relies is that all the inhabitants of South Africa "owe allegiance" to the government, are therefore guilty of "treason" if they fight against it and cannot possibly be considered in any light except as criminals. This is a notion which began to be outdated at the time of the American Declaration of Independence. It was finally demolished by Karl Marx and the First International, who made it abundantly clear that allegiance to a bourgeois state can never be an imperative for the people. In our time, the repeated resolutions of the United Nations on the specific case of the racist bourgeois state have placed it beyond doubt that, far from having a legal duty to obey such a state, the people have a duty to resist it.

The pedantic and outmoded quibbles of a Professor Booysen, or of the judges before whom the cases of freedom fighters have been heard, must not be allowed to obscure a clear and simple issue. The fighters of the national liberation movement are soldiers waging a just war. They are entitled to the protection of the laws of war. Generally accepted international law demands it. Justice demands it. The issue must be raised again and again, ever more sharply, by all the supporters and sympathisers of the movement, until the regime has no alternative but to give way.

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IMPERIALISM, APARTHEID AND DESTABILISATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

An SACP Position Paper

Imperialist strategy in Southern Africa and the relationship between imperialism and apartheid have long been matters of central concern to Marxist-Leninists on our continent. These issues have become even more important as the major imperialist powers are pressurised to distance themselves somewhat from their historic ally — the South African apartheid regime. In addition to certain rhetorical denunciations of apartheid, they have also begun to cultivate new relationships with independent states in the region and elements within the broad democratic movement in South Africa.

A one-sided emphasis on areas of continued collaboration between imperialism and the apartheid regime would fail to appreciate the potential significance of the emergence of certain contradictions between them. But to concentrate on points of contradiction while neglecting or underestimating the importance of areas of continued collaboration would be equally wrong. It is essential for both the liberation movements and the independent states to reach a common understanding of the context and objectives of current imperialist manoeuvring in the sub-continent.

The relationship between apartheid and imperialism has always been that of an essentially contradictory alliance. The Nationalist Party, which has ruled South Africa for 40 years, is not and never has been the direct political representative of either foreign or the most important sections of domestic monopoly capital. At the same time, apartheid policies have been directed towards creating extremely favourable conditions for capital accumulation. Based on the super-exploitation of the colonially oppressed black majority of the working class, apartheid has offered a haven for capitalist investors, yielding rates of return amongst the highest in the world. Since the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, capital concentration and centralisation have proceeded at an unprecedented pace, such that today 6 corporations control 87.5% of the shares listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Based on the existence of a ring of colonially ruled "buffer states" (the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique and the settler-ruled British colony of Rhodesia) apartheid South Africa was also the undisputed hegemonic force in a tightly integrated regional economic sub-system until the mid-1970's. In this sub-system, the main poles of accumulation and capitalist production were located in South Africa itself, while the economies of the other territories were subordinated to serve the needs of accumulation in South Africa, acting as labour reserves, providers of cheap raw materials or services and markets for South African produced commodities.

As long as relative calm and stability prevailed, the benefits which apartheid yielded to imperialism far outweighed any negative perceptions about racist minority rule. Super-profits assuaged the mild embarrassment of crude *herrenvolk* ideology and calmed their unease that the system was not as stable as it appeared. Imperialist relations with South Africa involved a high level of collaboration in the economic, political and, despite the UN embargo, military fields.

The current attempts by imperialism to distance itself from outright collaboration with apartheid stem directly from the advances in the struggles of the peoples of both southern and South Africa since the mid-1970's. These struggles have forced important circles in the imperialist camp to recognise that the apartheid regime is incapable of producing any adequate long term political responses to the deepening crisis facing it on either the domestic or regional fronts. Their response has been partial and vacillating. Above all it is based on the assumption that in the face of failure by SA's political power bloc, imperialism itself has to take the initiative and through its own independent strategy salvage and maintain the essentials of exploitation in South Africa and the existing regional economic relations of domination and subordination.

To bring out some of the main issues, we will examine the evolving strategies of both apartheid and imperialism towards other regional states in the period since 1975.

The Significance of the Changes of the Mid-1970's

There can be no doubt that the mid-70's marked an important turning point in the history of both South and Southern Africa. In South Africa, the wave of mass action (beginning with the strikes in Durban in 1973, passing through the 1976 youth uprising to reach the mass, sustained resistance on every front, including armed struggle, that characterises the situation today) initiated a process which has dramatically shifted the balance of forces in favour of the oppressed. In the region as a whole, the balance of forces was totally transformed with the collapse of the Portuguese African empire and the creation of independent states in Mozambique and Angola.

These developments posed a direct challenge to the interests and positions of both the South African racists and western imperialism. With the defeat of Portuguese colonialism, the edifice of Pretoria's regional policy began to crumble. The independence of Mozambique and Angola removed two key bastions from the ring of colonially ruled "buffer states" protecting racist South Africa and brought increasing pressure on two others — Zimbabwe and Namibia. It also had a broader significance. The governments of these two newly independent states were led by parties which proclaimed adherence to Marxism-Leninism and socialist principles. While remaining staunchly non-aligned, both Angola and Mozambique developed strong ties of friendship and cooperation with socialist countries.

These advances, coming at about the same time as the defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam, represented a set-back for US imperialism at a global level. *It meant that southern Africa would henceforth no longer be an exclusively western sphere of influence.* This defeat for imperialism was compounded by the fact that the apartheid regime was beginning to come under increased pressure from the oppressed people of South Africa; a resurgence which was encouraged by the victories won by the masses under the leadership of Frelimo and MPLA.

These changes in the regional and domestic balance of forces affected the strategic calculations of the apartheid rulers and their imperialist allies. Until 1973, the then Vorster regime remained confident that repression combined with the bantustan programme would be sufficient to secure minority rule indefinitely. Although they were concerned about the relative ineffectiveness of the Portuguese colonial army, Pretoria's strategists never seriously expected that the liberation forces would decisively defeat Portuguese colonialism. This was also essentially true for the strategic calculations of the major imperialist powers.

Less than 5 years before the April 1974 Portuguese coup, a top secret US "National Security Study Memorandum 39" had argued that US policy towards southern Africa should be based on the assumption that apartheid and colonial rule in Southern Africa would continue for the foreseeable future.

> *"The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come is through them.* There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the communists".

The conclusion drawn in the favoured "Tar Baby" option set out in the memorandum was that US policy should aim to *"encourage moderation* of the current rigid and colonial policies of the white regimes" in order to "minimise the opportunities available to the USSR and Communist China of exploiting the racial issue in the region"[1].

The largely unexpected changes of the balance of forces on both the regional and domestic planes forced the apartheid rulers and the imperialist powers to look for new strategies to defend their interests in the region.

In the 13 years since 1975, both apartheid and imperialist strategy have passed through various phases. Moreover, in the context of still unresolved crises, the *essentially supportive and collaborative relationship of earlier times has given way to a more complex relationship between these forces, involving elements of divergence, friction and even contradiction as well as continued collaboration in a number of spheres.* It is to the main elements of these strategies which we will now turn, first looking at those of the apartheid regime and then, those of the major imperialist powers, in particular the United States.

The Response of the Apartheid Regime

1974-8 Under Vorster

The surprise collapse of Portuguese colonialism led to a hasty reformulation of regional strategy by the Vorster regime in 1974. Initially, this proceeded in a somewhat ad hoc fashion. One element involved an expansion of military capacity. The 1974/5 military budget increased 1.5 times on the previous year and by 1977/8 was 3.5 times larger than that of 1973/4. Another element was the launching of "détente" as a new diplomatic/political initiative in October 1974. Its objective was vaguely defined as drawing the states of southern Africa into a "constellation of completely independent states" which would form a "strong bloc" and "present a united front against common enemies"[2].

Détente was orchestrated and conceived by the notorious Bureau of State Security (BOSS). It involved a search for influential allies within the OAU, particularly in the southern African region. Bribery, secret diplomatic contacts (often arranged through BOSS's connections with western intelligence services) and eventually a visit by Vorster to a number of countries in West Africa were all means used to attempt to achieve this end. At the same time, some minor internal changes were made such as the scrapping of some forms of "petty apartheid". This had the clear objective of giving credence to the notion that "negotiation" could be a viable alternative to "confrontation".

But the major regional "initiative" of the Vorster regime was undoubtedly the *South African invasion of Angola in October 1975,* designed to prevent the MPLA from coming to power. This was the first large-scale military incursion by the apartheid armed forces since World War 2. As is known, in the end the invasion failed to achieve its central objective. Fapla and Cuban troops succeeded in expelling South African forces from Angola by March, 1976. This proved to be a severe setback not only for attempts to destabilise newly liberated Angola, but also for Vorster's entire détente policy. After the Angolan debacle, the remaining impetus to maintain dialogue with South Africa was destroyed by the brutal repression of the Soweto youth uprising. Not even the most conservative African regime could now afford to be seen to be collaborating with a regime which shamelessly slaughtered unarmed black school children in the streets.

By the end of 1976, in addition to the gathering internal crisis, the apartheid regime faced a collapse of its regional policies. Top military strategists, in growing collaboration with monopoly capital, had become more stridently critical of the basis on which regional as well as other dimensions of state security policy had hitherto been conducted. The 1977 Defence White Paper was the first document in which the top military commanders publicly set out their alternative strategy, under the name "Total Strategy". They argued that it was necessary to mobilise economic, political and psycho-social as well as military resources to defend and advance the interests of the apartheid state internally and in the region. The White Paper identified the need "to maintain a solid military balance relative to neighbouring states and other states in Southern Africa". At the same time it called for "economic action" and "action in relation to transport services, distribution and telecommunications" to promote "political and economic collaboration among the states of Southern Africa".[3]

The Regional Strategy of the Regime under Botha — 1978-1988

"Total Strategy" was adopted as official state policy when P.W. Botha came to power in September 1978. This led to a restructuring of regional policy in several important ways. First the objectives of this policy were reformulated. The vague idea of a constellation of states was substantially developed to become the ultimate objective of regional strategy. Both the worsening position of the apartheid regime in Southern Africa and the initial emergence of strains in relations with the major Western powers acted as a pressure for such a constellation. In this new scenario the "moderate" states of Southern Africa faced a common "Marxist onslaught" but could not depend on unqualified support from the Western powers and therefore they needed to construct a "regional alliance". Naturally South Africa would play the pivotal role.

It was recognised, however, that aspects of apartheid policies were a barrier to formalised alliances with surrounding states. Therefore it was considered necessary to create a "counter ideology to Marxism" in the region which could be consolidated by promoting a number of joint economic projects. *These were to demonstrate the superiority of South African capitalism over socialist alternatives* and would depend on a high level of involvement by the private sector.

From the outset the "counter ideology" strategy also aimed to attract regional states to enter into "non-aggression pacts" with Pretoria as the first step towards promoting "the concept of mutual defence against a common enemy"[4]. Through this two-pronged action on the economic and security fronts it was hoped to deepen the ties between South Africa and its neighbours and slowly bring into being the objective basis for what Foreign Minister Pik Botha described as "a common approach in the security field, the economic field and even the political field"[5].

The constellation strategy was promoted as "a regional solution to regional problems". As such, South Africa would be recognised internationally as the *de facto* "regional power" with whom the major powers would have to deal. In the process, Southern Africa would automatically be considered a sphere of South African influence.

While a "constellation of states" was the main and ultimate objective, "Total Strategy" also defined a number of more immediate and limited regional objectives. These included pressuring states in the region:

- to refuse to permit liberation movements to operate from their territories and to take steps to prevent them from operating clandestinely;
- to refrain from developing strong economic and particularly military ties with socialist countries;
- to maintain and deepen their economic links with South Africa and to refrain from supporting calls for sanctions;
- to moderate their criticisms of apartheid

New instruments were also developed to achieve these reformulated regional policy objectives. Following the 1975/6 debacle in Angola, the SADF was reorganised into a highly mobile conventional force to be used in neighbouring countries. At the same time its capacity to fight a "counter-insurgency war" was raised. ARMSCOR was entrusted with the task of correcting the deficiencies in armaments which the Angolan invasion had revealed. The official military budget nearly trebled between 1977/78 — 1987/88 to reach R6,684 million. Taking account of other items of military and security spending, real budgeted military expenditure in 87/8 was closer to R9 billion, i.e. *25-30% of total government spending and 8-9% of gross domestic product*[7].

This general expansion was complemented by the development of particular capabilities of aggression against neighbouring states, most of which have now been tested in practice. Of special importance are the "reconnaisance commandos" or "recces" and other specialist units which now constitute a separate command within the SADF under Major-General van der Waal. Equally important was the promotion of surrogate forces, such as UNITA, the MNR, the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) and the so-called "Super-ZAPU", controlled by Military Intelligence and trained and supported by the SADF, these forces were allegedly "indigenous resistance movements" because they drew their recruits from the country concerned.

Wielding The Big Stick

Aside from the military front, considerable effort has gone into looking for ways in which economic and other links could be used to further the regime's objectives in the region. "Incentive levers" or "techniques of persuasion" include aid and cooperation in joint infrastructural projects. "Techniques of coercion" or "disincentive levers" include limiting and obstructing the use of South Africa's rail and harbour facilities (e.g. Zimbabwe 1981, Zambia and Zimbabwe 1986); limiting or banning migrant labour (Mozambique has been especially hard hit. In October 1986 SA banned recruitment of migrant labour from the country, threatening a loss of revenue of some $30 million a year and a grave increase in unemployment); controlling access to and movement through South Africa (e.g. Lesotho in 1983, 1984 and shortly before the coup in January 1986); restricting imports from and exports to neighbouring states (Zambian maize imports in 1979; Zimbabwean oil imports in 1982); withdrawing technical personnel (e.g. Mozambique in 1981)[8].

The ANC has identified five phases in the application of the regime's "Total Strategy" at the regional level[9]:

Phase one (1978 to early 1980) saw the regime try to launch its "constellation". The then still colonised Zimbabwe, together with Malawi and Swaziland were particularly targeted as potential adherents. However, hopes were dashed when Zimbabwe became independent under a Zanu-PF government and when all the independent states of the region associated themselves with the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). SADCC was set up with the central objective to reduce economic dependence of member states, particularly, but not only, on South Africa.

These setbacks led directly to the *second phase,* where Pretoria launched its campaign of regional destabilisation. Between 1980 and the end of 1981, it proceeded in a rather *ad hoc* way to strike at a wide number of states with little apparent clarity of purpose.

This was followed by *phase three* during which destabilisation was intensified and became more focused. *Angola and Mozambique were the main targets as they were identified as Pretoria's primary adversaries in the region.* In setting out to destroy their economies, indeed their very social fabric, the South African regime sought to crush the challenge they posed to its regional designs, including the promise they held of constructing a viable alternative to continued dependence on South African capitalism. This phase lasted from the end of 1981 until the signing of the accords with Angola and Mozambique in 1984.

Phase four began with the signing of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement with Angola in February, 1984, and particularly with the Nkomati Accord signed with Mozambique in March of that year. Both Angola and Mozambique entered these agreements hoping to force Pretoria to cease its destabilisation campaign against them or, failing this, to expose South Africa as the regional aggressor. For the apartheid regime, which initiated these agreements, they were tactical devices to advance specific objectives. Particularly through the Nkomati Accord, the racists hoped to deprive the ANC of its alleged bases in Mozambique and thereby deal a major blow to the liberation struggle inside the country. They also believed it would lead to major political changes in Mozambique itself — perhaps even to "power sharing" with Pretoria's surrogates, the MNR; that from it a generalized acceptance by regional states of South Africa's claims to regional hegemony would follow; and that it would contribute towards Pretoria breaking out of its international isolation.

It is now apparent to all that there was never any serious intention on the regime's part to abide by the terms of the Accord, although some efforts were made to mobilize "economic incentive levers" and to project an image of concern to promote peaceful coexistence in the region. This phase lasted until about May, 1985.

Mass Popular Resistance

The abortive SADF raid on Angolan oil installations in May, 1985, was the start of the *fifth and current phase.* Abandoning the pretences of the Accord phase, the regime has engaged in an escalating cycle of more intense internal repression and external aggression and destabilisation. The failure of its strategy of crushing the liberation struggle inside the country led Pretoria to revert back to overt, naked destabilisation. In the period immediately following Nkomati, 1984-6, in fact, mass popular resistance reached new and unprecedented levels. The "Black Local Authorities" system and the tri-racial parliament were still-born; embryonic structures of popular power began to emerge in town and countryside. These developments not only exposed the unacceptability of Botha's "reformed apartheid" to the majority of the people of South Africa, they also highlighted the fact that racist minority rule had entered a phase of chronic and irreversible decline.

In this context, the perception that the Botha regime has no viable domestic or regional strategy began to reach beyond the ranks of the democratic movement. *Important elements within both domestic monopoly capital and imperialist circles found themselves compelled by events to recognise that the "reformed apartheid" programme they had supported was failing.* For the first time they were forced to seriously contemplate some movement beyond racist minority rule in order to make South and Southern Africa "safe for capitalism".

The regime had lost the strategic initiative. It was faced with a choice between two broad alternatives. Either it could begin to move towards a negotiated transfer of power, or it could try to prevent its downfall through intensified repression and political intransigence. Pretoria dramatically highlighted its choice by conducting raids against Gaborone, Lusaka and Harare on the same day in May, 1986, as the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group returned to South Africa to present proposals for a "possible negotiating concept". In June, 1986, the regime declared a nation-wide State of Emergency which has continued ever since. A reign of vicious repression and terror has been unleashed against democratic forces of every hue and colour. Regionally, Pretoria's strategists seem to have concluded that their interests are best served by ensuring that neighbouring countries are kept in a state of permanent crisis. Domestic repression and regional aggression now have absolute priority and they hope that with the connivance of imperialism, it will cost them little at the international level.

The Response of Imperialism

Imperialism's stance in the face of Pretoria's unfolding destabilisation campaign was initially highly collaborative. Pretoria's 1975 invasion of Angola received the direct, if covert backing of the Ford Administration and to a lesser extent from British Intelligence. The $14 million covert CIA operation[10] provided UNITA and FNLA with arms and mercenary support, while the US advisers encouraged Pretoria to launch its invasion in October 1975. It was also in this period, however, that doubts and hesitation about giving Pretoria a blank cheque began to set in. Although the Ford Administration continued to strongly support the attempt to overthrow the MPLA government, a Senate amendment blocked funds and forced the administration to back down from plans to support an attempt by the SADF to seize Luanda.

This provoked a major cooling of relations between Pretoria and Washington. In the absence of US political and military support, the SADF began withdrawing from Angola in January, 1976, complaining that it had been betrayed by the United States. The period of the Carter Administration (1976-January, 1980) coincided with an impasse on South African regional policy following the collapse of "détente" and the Botha takeover. The relative cooling of relations was reflected in the emphasis in Botha's constellation strategy, which stressed the need to create a regional bloc not immediately dependent on Western support. But, while the US condemned some of the atrocities committed by apartheid internally and in the region, it continued to veto proposals for effective action against the regime.

Constructive Engagement 1980-83

The coming to power of the Reagan Administration in the US resolved the ambiguities of the Carter period in favour of a new collaborative relationship with Pretoria. Its architects called it "constructive engagement". The new administration also launched its complementary notorious "Reagan doctrine" which backed reactionary insurgents against progressive governments. Both elements significantly contributed to Pretoria's unfolding regional destabilisation strategy.

Secret correspondence between then US secretary of State, Alexander Haig, the Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Chester Crocker, and South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha revealed the extent to which the Reagan Administration was prepared to offer political, diplomatic and material support to Pretoria. The central aim of "constructive engagement", they said, was to *"open a new chapter in USA/SA relations" based on the "strategic reality" of South Africa's position as "the region's dominant country"*. Specifically, the US sought to "encourage" the racist regime's "reformed apartheid" programme and gain its cooperation in an independence plan for Namibia that would "not include the Soviets in Windhoek" and that recognized a "linkage" between the question of Namibian independence and the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. In return for cooperation on this Pretoria was to be offered:

- inclusion "in our general security framework";
- support in a campaign to end its international "polecat status";
- endorsement of the "constellation of states" proposal as the "foundation for a new era of cooperation, stability and security in the region"; and
- specific inducements, such as the supply of enriched uranium for the Koeberg nuclear power station[11].

Although the proposed "settlement" in Namibia never materialised, racist South Africa nevertheless benefitted enormously from the political and diplomatic support provided by "constructive engagement". Coming at the same time as it escalated its destabilisation campaign, Pretoria was even spared rhetorical condemnation of its aggressions. Instead, US official comments tended to condemn "all parties" for escalating violence in the region.

"Constructive engagement" also brought relevant material support. The technology to produce the G5 155mm artillery piece used during the 1987/8 invasion of southern Angola, for example, was secretly made available during this period as an inducement to get the regime to cooperate. But of even greater importance was the fact *that the sponsorship of surrogate forces, which have become the main instruments of South African regional destabilisation,* was self-consciously modelled on and informed by the Reagan Administration's creation and backing of similar forces in Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Angola.

The Regional Security Doctrine and The Accord Phase — 1983-5

In mid-'83 the Reagan administration began to express concern that destabilisation was generating more potential dangers than benefits. In a key address, delivered in June by Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Lawrence Eagleburger, it was argued that "a cycle of violence had begun: unless it is reversed the interests of the region and the West will be severely damaged"[12]. What concerned the United States was the possibility that the victims of racist aggression would turn increasingly to the Soviet Union. To forestall such an eventuality, "constructive engagement" was modified into what the US administration now called a "regional security doctrine". It has two primary objectives: to reduce the level of "cross border violence" and to create space for "peaceful change" in South Africa. It seemed to be based on the assumption that the Botha regime would initiate a process of "evolutionary reform" which would resolve the crisis and contain the escalating popular struggle in South Africa if it was not threatened by "violence".

Whatever their actual role in the signing of the Nkomati Accord in March 1984, the support of the imperialist powers for such accords was plain. They saw them as openings to enhance their influence and interests among regional states. It was in this period that the complex battle for "the hearts and minds" of Southern Africa began. On one side stood the independent states of the region. They were concerned to widen the distance between the major imperialist powers and the apartheid regime, to minimise the possibilities of direct imperialist support for destabilisation and to benefit from the economic aid and credits being offered to reconstruct their war-torn economies. On the other side stood the imperialist powers who aimed to use the leverage created by destabilisation to advance specific objectives. Initially these focussed on attempts to restore economic ties between the independent states and their colonial neighbour and to create space for Botha's "reform" programme. They also wanted to influence the domestic economic policies of these countries.

An important new dimension was added as the democratic struggle inside South Africa advanced contrary to the hopes or expectations of either Pretoria or the imperialists and "reformed apartheid" visibly began to fail.

The imperialist powers started *to canvass for the active support from regional states for a managed negotiated settlement to the crisis in South Africa.* Although precise proposals have yet to appear, the main thrust of the type of settlement the imperialists want is clear. They recognise that the installation of a "multi-racial" government is an unavoidable necessity. What they are concerned to *ensure is that this new government will be unable to challenge any of imperialism's fundamental interests.* The various proposals that have come from their quarters have therefore suggested a number of devices — minority vetoes, entrenched "group rights" for racial minorities, bills of rights freezing existing property relations etc. — which are all designed to prevent any real socio-economic change.

Moreover, while imperialism has shown its preparedness to contemplate a change along these lines, it has also clearly indicated that it will not do anything to either dislodge the existing regime or force it to negotiate a transfer of power. This is not surprising. Their recognition that change is unavoidable and necessary does not come from any inherent inability on their part to coexist with apartheid, but rather is generated from the pressures of an advancing people's struggle. Furthermore, it is not in the interests of current plans to see the existing order substantially weakened. For the "multi-racial government" scenario to be effective, the racists need to be present as a powerful force in a negotiating forum so that they will be able to force through compromises which favour both themselves and the imperialists.

The imperialist powers are now seeking support for a plan of this nature plus a reduction in the level of international pressure for sanctions from Southern Africa. These considerations have had a major bearing on their current stance on destabilisation. In order to cultivate relations with regional states, Western powers have had to distance themselves from apartheid and its regional aggression. However, it has not been in their interests to do anything which would further weaken Pretoria. *Thus, they have resolved this "dilemma" by offering aid to the victims of destabilisation, while refraining from taking any effective punitive action against its perpetrators.*

Conclusion

The current relationship between the apartheid regime and the major Western imperialist powers is complex. On the one hand, close collaboration continues. Despite calls for sanctions, they continue to maintain important trade and investment links with Pretoria and they are extremely reluctant to implement even limited sanctions. In defiance of the UN they also continue to maintain important military ties, which have direct relevance to regional destabilisation. Imperialism thus continues to underwrite racist reaction in South Africa and its devastating effects on the majority of the country's and region's peoples. On the other hand, differences between Pretoria and the West have begun to emerge as the regime's "solutions" clearly fail to resolve the growing internal crisis. The imperialist forces fear that the current internal repression and external aggression option will not, in the end, quell mass resistance. They reason that it might even be potentially damaging to the West's longer term interests in the region. Thus, they have begun to explore alternative solutions which demand some change in South Africa itself. However, these do not even begin to address the aspirations of the people.

It is clearly in the interests of the liberation movements (ANC and SWAPO) and the independent states to widen the differences and contradictions and to isolate the racist regime as far as possible. But this is not an easy struggle. Independent states with economies ravaged by destabilisation and in desperate need of international economic aid are being subjected to intense pressures to "moderate" their policies on key domestic and regional questions. The South African liberation movement is also being pressured into entering into deals which would defuse the struggle inside the country without bringing about a just political settlement.

The ANC-led liberation alliance has repeatedly expressed its willingness to enter into genuine negotiations aimed at transforming South Africa into a united, non-racial democracy. It refuses, however, to be part of any bogus solution designed to shore up the crumbling edifice of apartheid. A conducive climate first has to be created before genuine negotiations can seriously be contemplated.

As long as peoples' leaders remain in detention, democratic organisations are banned and our people are prevented from engaging in normal political activity by a State of Emergency, genuine negotiations cannot take place. We see no signs of the Botha regime creating such a climate. On the contrary, as we have argued earlier, Pretoria has strategically opted against negotiations. This fact is confirmed by the banning of the UDF and other democratic organisations in February, and its current assassination campaign against leaders of the democratic movement and members of the ANC. Events have proved beyond any doubt that it is only external and internal pressure which has any hope of bringing Botha to the negotiating table on a realistic agenda. Isolated diplomatic proposals for the peaceful resolution of the SA conflict, however well-motivated, are at the moment misguided, they put back the prospects of a peaceful settlement because they objectively help to divert the world away from stepping up its pressures against apartheid.

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Friendship

“THE BIGGEST STAYAWAY IN OUR HISTORY”

ANATOMY OF A STRIKE

By Ray Alexander

The stayaway by two to three million workers on June 6, 7 and 8 was the biggest in South African history. It should be studied carefully. In this period of acute challenges we must closely analyse the highlights of the stayaway, the achievements and failures.

What factors made possible the mobilisation of this great mass of workers, at the risk of their jobs and the forfeit of wages?

Major affiliates of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) were preparing to continue their Living Wage Campaign with some of the most important disputes of 1987 still unresolved. In 1987 there were 1,148 strikes involving 591,000 workers and a loss of 5,8 million mandays. This does not include the strikes in the SA Transport Services (SATS) and Postal Services with an estimate of at least 800,000 mandays lost.(1) Strike action resulted in the loss of 243,000 working days during the first three months of this year, according to an industrial relations review releasd by a group of management consultants, FSA industrial relations. According to them, wages and working conditions were once again the major cause of strikes . . . Cosatu was involved in 41 of the 47 strikes during this quarter.(2)

This strike figure indicates that SA is now a country with a high strike prospensity. Gone is the time when Vorster, then Prime Minister, boasted to investors in the Federal Republic of Germany a few days before the Soweto uprising in 1976 "that South Africa was free of strikes".

According to Andrew Levy Associates (labour consultants) black trade unions collectively obtained higher wage increases than any other group of workers in South Africa, in terms of wage settlements.(3) These settlements testify to Cosatu's efficiency in wage negotiations. But Cosatu is far from being satisfied. It points out that the increases fall short of the living wage it has undertaken to obtain for all workers.

According to the Central Statistical Services, real wages in at least 10 sectors actually declined between July and October 1987. The reduction in money terms ranged from between R6 and R27. The average inflation rate floated between 16% and 18% while the consumer price index for lower income groups increased by up to 25%.(4)

Therefore employers during this year would have to increase wages by 25% merely to keep pace with the average of inflation. The Living Wage Campaign had to consider the increase in the unemployment rate which reduces family incomes. Official figures put the total jobless figure at over 4 million, while academics have put it around 6 million. Earlier this year Louis Koch, director of Community Services in the Cape Province administration, said: "The Eastern Cape had an extremely high unemployment rate of about 60%. This means that about 900,000 blacks were unemployed."(5)

An aggravating factor was capital's pressure on the regime to reduce the number ofjobs in the public sector, freeze wage increases at a maximum 3%, and privatise the economy as a way to solve their economic crisis. Hugh Herman, managing director of Pick 'n Pay, rejected the 3% when agreeing with CCAWUSA (Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union) for an increase of 22%, saying "that workers would not settle for a 3% rise, they needed more money to survive".(6)

Capital urged the government to cut back on jobs, and thousands of workers were dismissed in consequence. Those jobs left vacant at SATS (SA Transport Services), Post Office and other state sectors were simply not filled. The government cancelled the customary annual bonus, the so-called 13th cheque, paid to employees in the public sector and announced the privatisation of some enterprises, as well as severe cuts in the welfare services, benefits provided to government servants in the form of health care, pensions, transport, housing, road and maintenance, telephone, electricity etc.

It is evident that Botha's announced privatisation — selling state assets to private investors — serves several purposes: it imitates Thatcher's privatisation schemes and is bound to get her approval. It will also provide the regime with sorely needed funds for their all-consuming military adventures, formerly obtained from international agencies such as the World Bank and financial centres in Paris and Geneva. Privatisation in South African terms will attract the support of capital, restore some of the authority that the regime has lost because of its deplorable record and mismanagement and its inability to bring about normal political processes instead of government by State of Emergency.

Cosatu rejected privatisation. The workers' solution to the economic crisis is to bring big monopolies under the control of the workers, so that the wealth workers produce can be used to improve the lives of the working people.

Living Wage Campaign

Cosatu and its affiliates were busy with their Living Wage campaign and planning a campaign to stave off the enacting of the Industrial Labour Relations Amendment Bill, when the regime on 24 February imposed a wide range of sweeping repressive measures against seventeen democratic organisations and 18 persons forming the core leadership of the mass democratic movement. A wide range of restrictions were imposed on Cosatu which was prohibited from performing acts specified in 29 regulations promulgated by PW Botha as the State President in terms of the Public Safety Act of 1953 and amendments to the State of Emergency regulations. The regulations enable the regime to limit the powers of organisations and individuals without prior notice and merely by order in the government gazette. Cosatu is forbidden to call for the release of detainees or the repeal of death sentences, to support the boycotts of elections or to particippate in any political action alone or in cooperation with other organisations.(7)

These are the harshest repressive measures imposed on the labour and liberation movement since the ban imposed on the ANC and PAC under the Unlawful Organisations Act of 1960.

Cosatu is the target of abominable attacks by Adriaan Vlok, the so-called Minister of Law and Order, and Du Plessis, the Minister of Manpower, whose job it is to deal with trade unions. The extraordinary measures taken to suppress political action by Cosatu are an exposure of the regime's fear of entering into non-violent negotiation with the leaders of the people. It is worth noting that the action taken against Cosatu and other organisations and individuals elicited strong protests from the 12 governments of the European Economic Community (EEC) meeting in Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany. They warned South Africa that the execution of the Sharpeville Six might lead to sanctions being imposed by the EEC. They called for the release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners and warned of punitive measures if the regime introduced the threatened new laws depriving anti-apartheid organisations of financial support.(8)

The state and the capitalist class aim to crush the people's resistance to oppression, to curb trade union militancy and to deprive trade unions of freedom to take part in activity outside the narrow limits of wage negotiations. The regime is determined by repression, mass dismissals, cooption, the upgrading of townships, the extension of shareholding to workers in companies, and similar means to force workers to withdraw from politics. Some workers may no doubt succumb to these pressures, but the great majority will continue to demand political rights, without which they cannot maintain the industrial gains made in the last decade.

The workers' determination was demonstrated on 21st March — the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Hundreds of thousands of black workers stayed away from work. They were marking the 28th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, and protesting against the repressive retrictions and bans imposed on Cosatu and other democratic organisations.

It was conceded by all observers that the stayaway was more widely observed than in past years, due no doubt to the workers' anger against the retrictions and the Bill. This mass stayaway took place despite the regime's attempts to stifle the protest. The workers rejected the regime's offer to allow the 1st of May to be celebrated as a paid holiday on the first Friday in May and commemorated the day in the way they wanted despite the banning of meetings.

Cosatu declared its mass campaign against the restrictions imposed on the 24th February and to stave off the enactment of the Labour Relations Bill and warned of the "strongest action" if employers failed satisfactorily to oppose the Bill. It organised seminars and workshops so that their membership became fully aware of the dangerous implications of the restrictions of the Bill. It declared that the Bill is in breach of accepted international labour standards and is an attack on the fundamental freedom of association; it entrenches racial trade unions, erodes job security and limits the right to strike.

An Attack on Unionism

In a document analysing the Bill Cosatu particularly drew attention to clauses which:

(a) give the Minister of Manpower the discretion to decide on what constitutes an unfair labour practice. This would be decided from the standpoint of the employers and the state. It was therefore legitimate to put pressure on employers, because the employers are the direct beneficiaries of the proposed legislation;

(b) prevent unions from declaring a second dispute on the same issue within 15 months of a previous settlement. This is contrary to the present practice whereby most wage agreements with employers last for periods of between six and twelve months;

(c) ban consumer boycotts. This would remove from workers legitimate weapons that do something to restore the power balance between the monopolies and the unions;

(d) allow employers under certain circumstances to dismiss a worker with less than a year's service without a hearing and allow the selective re-employment of dismissed workers. This would give employers the green light to victimise workers' leaders;

(e) make it possible for companies to sue unions for staging illegal strikes. Under this clause union assets could be attached every time there is industrial action.

Cosatu has condemned the Bill as an outright attack on itself and the whole trade union movement. While opposing the negative features, Cosatu demands that the Bill be amended so that domestic, farm and public sector workers have the same rights under industrial legislation as other workers.

The Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Francois Blauchard, condemned the repressive measures of the SA government and urged the lifting of all restraints designed to inhibit trade union organisations from exercising widely recognised rights based on standards and principles of the Freedom of Association established by the ILO for the proper functioning of duly constituted trade unions. The world trade union movement also responded by protesting against the racist and repressive character of the Bill and expressed full support and solidarity for the struggle of the banned and restricted organisations.

Employers' organisations like SACCOLA (South African Consultative Committee on Labour Affairs), which include employer organisations in agriculture, commerce and industry, and the FCI (Federated Chamber of Industries) supported the Bill. They saw the Bill as an attempt to control labour power and claimed that "the proposed amendments are a mere codification of industrial court decisions and an even-handed reformulation of existing rights and duties. They are consistent with international labour standards".

They paid for pages in newspapers in opposition to Cosatu's view and misinformed the public. Their assertions were demolished by Clive Thompson, Director of the Labour Law Unit in the University of Cape Town, who stated that the Bill undermines established rights in the areas of unfair dismissals, collective bargaining and strike law; it protects racist labour traditions and conflicts with international norms. The International Labour Organisation's Convention 158 provides that the employment of a worker should not be terminated without a valid reason. The Bill proposes that a worker can be dismissed for no reason whatsoever during the first six months of employment. It removes any powers the Industrial Court would have to assess the fairness of any such action.

Retrenchments

The Industrial Court has developed a body of rules regulating retrenchment based on ILO conventions and recommendations. Principal among these is an employer's duty to consult with a representative trade union on pending retrenchments. The Bill undercuts this, stating that an employer's only obligation is to adhere to fair selection criteria (no mention is made of the well-accepted principle of "last-in, first-out"). The Bill does not impose a duty on an employer to recognise unions, but requires an employer to consult only with unions recognised by it on certain dismissal matters.

ILO Recommendation 163 calls for bargaining arrangements to be established between parties which are genuinely representative of workers and employers. The Bill fosters minority unionism. This will jeopardise many existing agreements based on the majoritarian principle.

The original Labour Relations Act recognises the legality of secondary strikes and lockouts. The amending Bill will outlaw such phenomena, even when an employer can counter a strike by moving production to subsidiary and associated companies. The end result will be that the present power balance between the bargaining parties will be markedly shifted in favour of capital. Without the entitlement to resort to commensurate economic pressure, the union's ability to bargain credibly and effectively will be eroded. The right to strike will also depend on a range of formalities, with the result that if any union member takes part in a strike which ultimately turns out to be unlawful, the union concerned will be held liable for the employer's losses. This is an open invitation to rogue employers to attempt to liquidate unions.

Industrial councils are at the centre of the statutory collective bargaining system. Only registered unions can participate in these structures and the Bill will make it easier for thoroughly unrepresentative, racially exclusive unions to gain access to the official bargaining forums and to maintain their presence there.(9)

Thus Clive Thompson's analysis is in full support of Cosatu's stand. Both Cosatu and NACTU (National Council of Trade Unions) accused the employers of conniving with the state over the instigation of the Labour Relations Amendment Bill. They stated that their memberships do not have the vote and were never consulted with regard to the Bill. Nonetheless, they voiced their criticism and made recommendations to the Department of Manpower relating to the Bill, but all their representations were ignored.

The Right to Strike

The ultimate weapon of organised labour is the strike. The International Labour Organisation resolution on the right to strike states that this right is one of the essential means through which workers and their organisations may promote and defend their occupational interests. The freedom of association and the strike weapon are part and parcel of the collective bargaining process which regulates the employer/employee relationship. A strike is the final step taken by workers to redress their grievances where all other means have failed.

Thousands of Cosatu members all over the country took action against the Bill and the restrictions imposed by the regime. Members of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU), followed by the National Union of Metal Workers (NUMSA) and the Food ad Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) staged placard demonstrations. Two hundred and fifty shop stewards from factories in Port Elizabeth held a protest meeting. Thousands of workers in Industria, Johannesburg, staged similar demonstrations, marching through the streets calling for the scrapping of the Bill and the repeal of the restrictions.

Employers threatened to dismiss workers and called in the police to disperse the demonstrators, many of whom were detained. A misinformation campaign by the state and employers began. The *New Nation* and *South* newspapers were banned and threats were made against other papers to silence the opposition.

The ANC met with NACTU on May 2 and 3 1988 to discuss the need for unity of the labour movement in the face of the repression by the racist regime against the mass democratic movement, the legislative programme including the Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the municipal elections scheduled for October 1988. They agreed that it was imperative for the labour movement inside the country to strive towards unity with the objective of a single labour federation and a commitment to the creation of a united democratic country free of racism.

Cosatu's Special Congress to discuss the Bill took place on May 14 and 15 at Wits University. The 1,500 delegates representing one million signed members alighted from crammed buses chanting, toyi-toying and waving banners reading "Away with Restrictions", "Away with the Labour Bill, we are here to tell PW Botha, that he has chosen to pick on the wrong people by picking on the workers". President Elijah Barayi told the Congress:

> "Our decision to hold the Congress comes in the wake of the banning of 17 organisations and the restrictions placed on the 18 individuals as well as COSATU. Despite these repressive measures, an outstanding feature of the present day situation remains the unbroken mood and determination of our people to surge forward".

A resolution adopted reiterated Cosatu's commitment "to struggle for the basic human rights of our members in every sphere as reflected in our policy resolutions."

Cosatu's General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, presented a framework for discussion of the crucial issues facing Cosatu and the progressive movement. He raised issues such as Cosatu structures and the divisions within and between Cosatu affiliates, and indicated the unorganised, unemployed, squatters, hostel dwellers, farm workers, teachers, women and the public sector as sectors that require the special attention of the progressive movement. He said: "We know that our programmes and demands are the only ones that can meet the needs of the masses . . . we can win over other sectors who are committed to democracy". His analysis which had been circulated among affiliates before the Congress stimulated intense discussions on strategies.(10)

National Peace Protest

The delegates decided after considerable debate to convene a conference of a broader range of anti-apartheid organisations to focus on opposing apartheid repression. A key resolution was a call for three days of "National

Peace Protest" against the recent banning of 17 organisations, the clampdown on Cosatu's political activities and the Bill. The delegates also decided to hold demonstrations at organised factories every Tuesday to protest against the Labour Relations Amendment Bill.

Cosatu's declaration concluded that the government was manoeuvring out of weakness as it battles against deep economic problems and the general lack of political support from the people. "We reaffirm our commitment to destroy apartheid."(11)

On May 20, 1988, the Labour Relations Amendment Bill was tabled in Parliament. Workers were alerted and the security police were in action from May 24 to 26. The Cosatu Port Elizabeth Local Committee was disrupted by security police who took names and photographs of every shop steward.

Wits Joint Shopsteward Council was also disrupted by the security police. Cosatu's Education Chairman was detained on Wednesday night and released on Friday. Security police raids were conducted in Springs and Germiston. A media seminar in Mamelodi was invaded and several activists were taken in for questioning; material from the seminar was confiscated. Thousands of smear pamphlets aimed at causing division and confusion were distributed throughout the country on May 26 and 27.

Cosatu affiliates received letters from various firms (Anglo-American, Haggie Rand, SASOL and ISCOR) wanting to know what action was planned for June 6, 7 and 8 and which unions would be involved. Management threatened to take action against the unions and workers including suing for damages, withdrawal from wage negotiations and recognition agreements, and mass dismissals.

Joint Stand

On June 1 Cosatu met Nactu to clarify the confusion around the call for peaceful national protest. A joint press statement was released agreeing that the protest would take place on June 6, 7 and 8 and it was left to each community to decide precisely what form of protest it should take.

On June 2, Cosatu met the employers at SACCOLA's request. The meeting ended in disagreement as the employers came out strongly in favour of the Bill and asked Cosatu to say that protest would exclude stayaway action. Cosatu told the employers that their adverts in the press on the Bill were not factually correct, that the Bill attacked unions, excluded farm, domestic and public sector workers and was part of the government's total strategy against the democratic labour movement.

On June 3 Cosatu called a press conference at which it exposed SACCOLA's invitation to meet Cosatu as a propaganda stunt by SACCOLA and reiterated that its membership, denied the vote, have the right to stage a three-day national protest in legitimate opposition to the Bill and the restrictions.

The employers attacked Cosatu in the weekend newspapers and stated they could see no reason for the protest action. Their adverts praised the new Bill and claimed unions had nothing to complain about.

On June 4 the employers began interdicting affiliates of Cosatu against their members participating in any illegal work stoppage during the days of protest. Freestate Consolidated Gold Mines successfully interdicted the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in Bloemfontein and Castle Shipping in Port Elizabeth were successful in their interdict against the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&GWU).

Scores of telexes were sent by companies to Cosatu and its affiliates, warning them that disciplinary action would be taken against workers and their unions for participating in the protest. The action they would take would cover mass dismissal, disciplinary action against workers, withdrawal from wage negotiations and the cancellation of recognition agreements, court interdicts and the possibility of damages suits against unions.

Cosatu urged maximum solidarity from the international trade union movement and all democrats opposed to apartheid. It is clear, said Cosatu, that the employers will be acting inconcert with the state and using apartheid legislation to deny the right to protest against laws, in the formulation of which our people have no say, but which severely jeopardises our interests and roll back our hard-won rights. Cosatu appealed for solidarity to defend our struggle against apartheid.

In a press statement Cosatu reiterated its opposition to the Bill and the restrictions. Cosatu said it did not believe that there was any merit in debating the Bill through the media and had consequently referred the matter to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva for determination.

Cosatu held discussions with the Black Taxis Association, NAFCOC, UDF affiliates, Labour Forum, ex-TUCSA (Trade Union Council of South Africa) affiliates, churches including some Zion churches, making it clear that the restrictions and the Bill would affect all strata of the exploited and oppressed people. A groundswell of opposition to the regime's measures developed throughout the country, holding out the promise of unity in action.

Prior to June 6, Cosatu issued more press statements, leaflets and brochures explaining the restrictions and the Bill and exposing the employers' threats to the workers and their collaboration with the State.

An industrial relations conference in Natal attended by about 700 top businessmen demonstrated an adversarial solidarity of employers against the trade unions. Employers including the so-called liberal Anglo-American group showed they were ready to use apartheid laws to suppress the limited and peaceful protest of the voteless.

The People Take Action

Three million people withdrew their labour on June 6, the first day of the national peaceful protest. The number dropped by between 10 and 15% on days 2 and 3, but the protest remained the biggest in our history.

The Labour Monitoring Group disclosed that the manufacturing sector was hardest hit, with an average stayaway of 77% over the three days in Natal and the PWV areas, followed by the retail sector stayaway rate of 55%. In the Western Cape, however, the stayaway was negligible. Part of this may be attributed to the fact that the work force is split between Coloured and African workers. Factories in the region tend to be smaller than those in other metropolitan areas. Only two industries appeared to be affected — construction and food — reporting up to 95% stayaway.

In the Eastern Cape, employment is dominated by the motor industry which employs 25,000 workers. All motor plants decided in advance to close down for three days, reflecting management's awareness that the stayaway was likely to be effective. The Natal region demonstrated strong support for the stayaway, despite threats from Inkatha and UWUSA (United Workers' Union of South Africa).(13)

In the PWV area, the industrial heartland of South Africa, the manufacturing sector displayed the highest stayaway, more than 70% of manufacturing workers observing the stayaway even on the last day. In the past commerce was most affected by stayaways followed by manufacturing. In this stayaway, the trend was reversed, no doubt due to the internal problems in CCAWUSA.

Achievements of the Stayaway

The fact that the stayaway took place on the scale that it did is a victory for our mass democratic movement, showing its popular support and the people's resistance to repression. That many of the workers participating in the stayaway were not unionised shows the following Cosatu has amongst the unorganised workers. The stayaway paralysed all major industrial areas. The support for the stayaway was so immense that no workers gave the excuse that they had been intimidated.

The state and the employers were convinced that the stayaway would be a failure, and the scale of the workers' action took them by surprise. The protest was a blow to the employers and security forces and a victory for the democratic forces. It showed that the two years of the State of Emergency restrictions and the employers' threats had failed to curb the workers' mobilisation and their resistance to repression.

Though mass protest was generally peaceful, there were bomb attacks along railway lines to Soweto and on a bus in Natal. There were familiar scenes of white labourers trying to keep shops and businesses open. The cities were empty and bus and railway stations deserted. Many schools and university students came out in solidarity. The stayaway cost the country's economy an estimated R500 million.

On day 2, the Minister of Manpower made a call to Cosatu saying "his door was open" and there was still time to amend the Bill. A Special Executive Committee decided to meet with the Minister. Cosatu and SACCOLA lawyers met for talks about Cosatu's proposal for arbitration by a third party, headed by an ex-judge.

Despite all objections, the Bill was passed by all three parliaments, but only after amendments had been made. The press reported that many of the objectionable clauses providing for state interference in the collective bargaining process were removed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee after written and oral submissions had been made by Cosatu, Nactu, some employer organisations, legal practitioners and academics.(14)

The stayaway showed that it is still possible to oppose effectively the regime's repression strategy. The removal of some key clauses constitutes a significant gain for the unions and their allies. The stayaway enhanced and strengthened Cosatu and its affiliated unions and exposed Buthelezi.

While international support is important, we still have major tasks to tackle at home:

a) divisions in trade unions like the one in CCAWUSA which affected the input in the stayaway;
b) the negligible input in the stayaway by the Cape Western Province, which was due to the inadequacy of political consciousness in that area, and
c) the need to organise the unorganised workers, who displayed their potential support, and to win workers away from UWUSA and Inkatha influences.

The National Manpower Commission's annual report stated that in 1987, 14 more trade unions were registered, bringing the total to 205 and increasing the membership of registered trade unions from 1.7 million to 1.87 million, representing 18% of the total economically active population. This figure excludes 88 unregistered unions with an estimated membership of 240,000.(15)

d) to work for one unified trade union federation of Cosatu, Nactu and all unaffiliated unions.

e) Last but not least, Cosatu has to deal with the issue of the white workers. The regime has attacked standards of living by the wage freeze and reduction of jobs in the public sector. We must explain to them that the apartheid regime will not only reduce their living standards, but cannot guarantee them peace. The only solution to their problems is to join the anti-apartheid forces and, together with the mass democratic movement, work for a united democratic South Africa!

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

By Brian Bunting

Moscow was garlanded on the occasion of the 19th All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which took place from June 28 to July 1. The conference was a festival and a celebration as well as a forum for serious debate on proposals to speed up the development of the country. Five thousand delegates had been elected by secret ballot on the basis of one delegate for every 3,780 members in all party branches, and all attended save for nine stricken by illness. The credentials committee reported that the Russian Federation elected 2,933 delegates, the Ukraine 891, Kazakhstan 225, Byelorussia 191, Uzbekistan 178, Georgia 106, Azerbaijan 104, Lithuania 56, Latvia 53, Moldavia 52, Armenia 51, Kirghizia 40, Tajikstan 33, Estonia 32 and Turkmenistan 31. Workers comprised 1,638 delegates, or almost one third of the total. There were 866 agriculturists, 354 heads of production associations, 108 collective farm chairmen and 74 state farm managers. Of the total of 436 delegates described as intellectuals there were 175 science workers and members of higher educational institutes, 94 educationists, 41 health service workers and 69 workers in culture and the arts. There were 1,258 women, or more than 25 per cent of the total.

The delegates arrived in Moscow with mixed emotions — high expectation tinged with apprehension, rather like parents prior to the birth of a baby: what would be its sex, whose features would it bear, would everything go well for mother and child?

Together with hundreds of other journalists representing the press of fraternal parties, I was invited by the CPSU to "cover" the Moscow conference. It was a fascinating and, in some respects, disturbing experience, but one which in the end reinforced confidence in the Soviet Party and people.

One of the conference posters prominently displayed in the streets of Moscow read: "To socialism — a revolutionary character and a historical perspective". It is perhaps a prosaic slogan which does not reflect the extraordinary and exciting atmosphere in which the conference was held, but it encapsulates the central themes which emerged. What is under way in the Soviet Union today is in every sense of the word a revolution. The character of this revolution needs to be studied not only by the people of the Soviet Union but also by the whole world, because in one way or another it will vitally affect the future of all humankind.

Everybody today knows the meaning of the words *perestroika* and *glasnost,* reconstruction and openness, which are the banners under which the Soviet revolution is being conducted. What these buzzwords reflect is the dissatisfaction of the Soviet people with so many aspects of their lives, their demand for fundamental change. They want an end of shortages and queues, of bureaucracy and censorship, of lies and evasions. While determined to avoid past mistakes, at the same time they want to preserve the real achievements of the revolution of 1917; they do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. What is going on, under the leadership of the Party, is a process of sifting the good from the bad, of consolidating the advances which have been made, and discarding everything that stands in the way of future progress. It is highly significant that in all the tumult of debate, nobody has called for the abandonment of the socialist perspective, nobody asks for the restoration of capitalism. They want a return to the spirit of Lenin, not to the Tsar.

The world is under the impression that the present Soviet revolution started with Gorbachev and is associated with his personality. Certainly his leadership is important, but he is not a dictator. He was elected general secretary of the CPSU in March 1985, and set about the task of restructuring at his first Central Committee plenum in April 1985. But it should be remembered that he was placed in his position by the majority of the members of the Central Committee and given his revolutionary mandate by the leaders of the CPSU who had chafed throughout the tenure of office of his predecessor Chernenko.

The Pillars of Reform

The programme of *perestroika* and *glasnost* initiated at the April 1985 Central Committee plenum was confirmed by the 27th Congress of the CPSU held in Moscow from February 25 to March 6, 1986. The strategy of accelerating the Soviet Union's socio-economic development outlined by the 27th Congress was based on two pillars:

1. raising the rate of economic growth by means of an all-out intensification of production on the basis of scientific and technological progress, a structural reconstruction of the economy, effective forms of management and of organising and stimulating labour so as to increase the productivity of labour.
2. a deepening of socialist democracy, overcoming inertness, stagnation and conservatism, the elimination of everything that was holding back social progress.

In his report to the 19th CPSU conference on June 28 this year Gorbachev claimed that, thanks to the implementation of the decisions of the 27th Congress, "the economy is gradually gaining pace". People's per capita real incomes had begun to grow again and had gone up by 4.6 per cent in the past two years of the current five-year plan. The output of consumer goods was rising. Construction of flats and cottages had increased by 6 per cent, of secondary schools by 22 per cent, of nurseries and kindergartens, clubhouses and cultural centres by 30 per cent and hospitals by as much as 100 per cent. Public health and education were being reorganised. The birth rate had gone up while the death rate had dropped. "This is related to no small extent to the war we have declared on hard drinking and alcoholism".

However, despite all the positive features, the economy was advancing too slowly, said Gorbachev, especially if judged by the people's standard of living and the food shortages — "probably the most painful and the most acute problem in the life of our society". Other delegates were not shy to draw attention to shortcomings in various aspects of Soviet life. In some areas workers complained that they could not get meat, that sugar was rationed, housing inadequate, consumer goods "have vanished altogether," pay levels pitiful. Because conditions in the countryside were so bad, it was difficult to retain the manpower necessary to increase agricultural production. Migration from rural areas continues. There was talk of "prospectless villages" which faced the threat of extinction because the young people flocked to the towns and there were fewer and fewer to replace the older generation. Delegate D.K. Motorny, member of the CPSU Central Committee, chairman of the Kirov farming co-operative in the Kherson region, called for capital investment in the countryside: it was necessary to provide heating, to build roads, to ensure that every house had running water and sewerage.

Delegate Vasily Staroduotsev, chairman of the agribusiness amalgamation Novomoskovskoye in the Tula region, said those who had mismanaged the country during the years of stagnation, who had addressed the economic problems of the country at the expense of farming, should be punished. They had inflicted heavy material and moral losses on the country as "the people had ceased to believe in anything and had ceased to work." Arkady Aidak, chairman of a collective farm near the Urals, criticised the administrative-command system of management which, he said, "resulted in the fact that we have been living for a long time mainly at the expense of peasants, their unpaid work". Gorbachev himself, in his report, estimated that food consumption could be increased by between 20 and 30 per cent at the present level of productivity if the transportation, storage and processing of the harvest could be carried out effectively and promptly. But, he added, "whatever resources we put into agriculture, they will not yield the desired results if no concern is shown for the individual, for his conditions of work and life".

Similar stories of waste, neglect, mismanagement, corruption and violations of human rights were reported by delegates from other areas of Soviet life, from some national republics, from industry, from the arts and professions. How had things got to this pass? Why was perestroika proceeding so slowly?

> "Frankly speaking, comrades", said Gorbachev in his report, "we have underestimated the extent and gravity of the deformations and the stagnation of the preceding period. There was a lot we simply did not know and did not see until now".

Freedom of The Press

Utilising the opportunities of *glasnost* to the utmost, the delegates showed no reluctance to voice their complaints at the conference. But the outstanding exponent of *glasnost* in the recent period has been the press, which week by week comes forward with details about present and, in particular, past abuses which leave the readers breathless. Time was when the Soviet press organs presented a uniform aspect — read one paper and you had read them all; they all carried the same message, the statements of the party leadership, the official communiques, repeated over and over. Today the Soviet press holds its readers fascinated as, despite all its handicaps and reservations, it diligently seeks for the truth. Indeed, the Soviet scene as a whole is the most stimulating in the world at the moment, as was testified by the hordes of foreign correspondents, TV crews and commentators who descended on Moscow to cover the conference. Many compared the atmosphere of excitement and anticipation to "Ten Days That Shook The World" in 1917.

There is an important difference. In 1917 the outcome of the struggle was in doubt until the guns of the Aurora thundered. Today in the Soviet Union it is the Party itself which is carrying out the cleansing revolutionary process. Most striking, both at the conference and in the press, is the sense of responsibility of the participants. Here it is not money that talks, but the anxiety to find the surest road to socialism. Despite disagreements about strategy and tactics, the extent of the underlying ideological unity is impressive and during the time of the conference itself brought consensus on many controversial issues.

Some delegates voiced anxiety about the freedom of debate and the freedom of the press. Vladimir Karpov, CC member and first secretary of the board of the USSR Writers' Union, complained that some people view *glasnost* as permission to write anything they please. The organs of press, he said, split into camps and waged internecine struggle which did huge damage. Another Soviet author, Yuri Bondarev, said that some Soviet press organs were using *perestroika* to destabilise reality, revising faith and morality. There were publications whose authors doubted everything: morality, courage, love, art, talent, family and great revolutionary ideas. Nihilist criticism was becoming a commanding force in the press. As a result young people had largely lost confidence in the truth, history, nearly the entire past and in the senior generation. He added:

> "The immorality of the press cannot teach morality. Not all newspaper and magazine editors have as yet fully realised, or want to realise, that *glasnost* and morality are a lofty civic discipline rather than arbitrariness according to the philosophy of Ivan Karamazov" (a character in Dostoevsky's novel).

Asked by foreign journalists at a press conference to comment on these views, delegate Vladimir Lakshin, first deputy chief editor of the magazine

Znamya (Banner), said that the critical spirit in the Soviet press was one of the principal gains of the policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and it would be totally unfair to condemn it. Many authors in the past had been protected from criticism by their regalias, titles and collected works, he said. Now they were flying into a rage because they were criticised.

> "In what concerns democracy and glasnost in the USSR, the situation is stable, as could be judged by the course of the 19th Party conference. This is not just a 'thaw', this is already spring, I think, and even may be the beginning of summer".

Mikhail Ulyanov, chairman of the board of the Union of Theatre Workers of the Russian Federation, wanted the freedom of the press to be protected by legal guarantees, and suggested that editors of the central, republican, district and regional newspapers should be elected at congresses and plenums, and not merely appointed. Intervening in the debate, Mikhail Gorbachev said:

> "If we abandon *glasnost*, criticism, self-criticism and democracy, it will be the end of *perestroika*. In the not too distant past some people had a monopoly over mass media organs, and we know what was the result of it. Now we see that another group of people stealthily tries to use the press as a nationwide rostrum on the same monopoly basis.
>
> "We should not replace one monopoly with another and one half-truth with another. We need the whole truth as much as we need life. We must know it and rebuild it on socialist principles."

Re-examining The Past

The whole truth about the history of the Soviet Union may never be known because the archives are incomplete and many of the witnesses are dead. A special commission has been set up by the Central Committee to re-examine past court verdicts and another to draft a treatise on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Already many condemned in the thirties as "enemies of the people" have been rehabilitated — Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and literally thousands of others. The conference decided that a memorial should be built in Moscow to the "victims of repressions", to quote Gorbachev's own words in his closing address.

There is still passionate argument among Soviet citizens about the role of Stalin in history, an argument that will not be settled until all the facts are known. The only pronouncement on Stalin which can be regarded as official is contained in Gorbachev's address last year on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. He went into the Stalin phenomenon in some detail, but the judgment of the Central Committee can be gauged from the following paragraph in his speech:

> "There is now much discussion about the role of Stalin in our history. His was an extremely contradictory personality. To remain faithful to historical truth we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains, and the gross political errors and abuses committed by him and those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society . . ..
>
> "The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable."

Next year will see the publication in the Soviet Union of a biography of Stalin written by Professor Dmitri Volkogonov, Director of the Institute of Military History. In an article in the newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta* last June, Professor Volkogonov described Stalin as politically incompetent, immoral, hypocritical, disloyal, ill-advised and mentally ill. Professor Volkogonov later said he was not a Stalinist or anti-Stalinist, but simply a person who considers that "the dent in the shield of our history ought to be described. I, like many, was once enchanted by Stalin . . . I remember how at this death we, the young lieutenants, were very sincerely dismayed and cried".

Professor Volkogonov was a delegate to the 19th CPSU conference. Asked by foreign journalists at a press conference about the present generation's attitude to Stalin, he said that after the first publication of extracts from his book he had received about 3,000 letters, from which it was clear that society was split in its attitude to Stalin, but it was not split in its choice in favour of socialism.

> "It may be that it is the first time now that people began pondering their past, present and future and in my view trial by truth cannot harm this positive process".

Volkogonov was not the only delegate to be questioned by journalists about Stalin. The same question put to the writer Vladimir Lakshin, deputy editor of *Znamya,* elicited the answer:

> "The majority of intellectuals give Stalin a fair place in history, taking into account his negative features and crimes".

Otto Lacis, Deputy Editor of the theoretical journal *Kommunist:*

> "My generation was not aware of many of the facts about Stalin. We did not know the reality of that time. It was not a consequence of terror or repression — we did not even know about the repression. Many of us thought Stalin was a genius. Today many who lived through those times do not want to reassess the situation.
>
> "You must remember that what was said by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 was not published. Nevertheless the Soviet people have a certain consciousness — they will not agree to the renewal of the Stalin cult. And there will be no personality cult in future".

V. Bikennin, editor of *Kommunist:*

> "Many of Lenin's ideas were dropped by Stalin and human beings were left behind. The idea of the revolution was not to produce more coal or steel than

> Britain or the United States but to create a better life for all human beings. Seated behind our green baize desks we have forgotten how to talk to the people".

Bikennin said Stalin's ideas were eclectic and did not amount to an independent ideological entity. "The word Stalinism is not printed in *Kommunist.*"

Controversy has raged over the article written by Nina Andreeva of Leningrad and published in the journal *Sovietskaya Rossia* some months ago calling for respect for the achievements of the past and defending the role of Stalin. When the article was first published it was greeted with widespread astonishment and a silence which some interpreted as official consent until three weeks later it was fiercely denounced by *Pravda* as contrary to *perestroika.* Nina Andreeva was thought by many to be a pseudonym behind which lurked a cabal of "conservatives", but she exists and wrote a long reply which *Pravda* did not print. Questioned about this, the editor of *Pravda,* V. Afanasiev, told a press conference that he had not published Andreeva's 26-page letter because he felt it important to emphasise that "*perestroika* is necessary — we have no other way". However, it was indicated that if Nina Andreeva were to send her article to *Moscow News* or *Ogonyok,* the standard bearers of *glasnost,* it might well see the light of day.

A Rallying Point

There is no doubt that the Soviet revolution of *perestroika* and *glasnost* has generated enormous controversy both inside and outside the Soviet Union. There were those who regarded the system of decentralisation, economic self-management and cost accounting as a deviation from the socialist path, a capitulation to capitalism. There were those so accustomed to the traditional commandist methods of administration that they could not adapt to the new methods being advocated by the Party. There was open resistance from some amongst the managerial cadres, inertia and the lack of initiative from others. Some lost their bearings and panicked, longed to get back to the state of "law and order" to which they were accustomed. Arguments raged over the interpretation of the past.

It was to rally the forces behind *perestroika* and *glasnost* that the 19th Party conference was called. To wait for the next Congress due in 1991 would be too long, to allow muddle and uncertainty to continue. The full force of the party had to be mobilised to develop and deepen *perestroika*, to make it irreversible; centres of resistance and inertia inside the Party itself had to be eliminated.

The main emphasis of the conference was placed on reform of the political system because, as Gorbachev stated in his opening address, it was the deformations in the political system that opened the way to the command methods of administration, the violations of socialist democracy and the cult phenomena which paralysed the socio-economic development of the country. "We are not starting from scratch", said Gorbachev. The demand for political reform was first voiced at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 and certain initiatives had been undertaken, but the measures proposed at the time had been frustrated by the bureaucracy which grew to fantastic proportions in the years of stagnation which followed. The number of people elected to various governmental and non-governmental bodies reached one third of the country's adult population. At the same time, these bureaucrats were far removed from real participation in the handling of state and civic affairs. More and more alienated from the people, they imposed decisions but bore no economic responsibility for the implications of their actions. Detailed centralised planning and control literally straitjacketed society and became a serious brake on the initiative of the people.

Since the start of the *perestroika* process, it could be seen that where decentralisation and economic self-management had been introduced, production and labour productivity had increased and the all-round quality of life had been immeasurably enhanced. Leaders of the Byelo-Russian delegation to the 19th Conference told a press conference:

> "Our economy is working well. We have plenty of meat, butter, eggs and poultry. There was for a while a problem with sugar but the situation is now normal. He who works better is supplied better".

Not all the republics could tell the same story.

The measures decided upon by the 19th conference are aimed at returning power to the people. The Soviets of People's Deputies at central and regional level are to be restored to a position of full authority and independence. A single, five-year term of office is to be established for all Soviets, and the period of service of deputies is to be limited to two consecutive terms. The principle of election by secret ballot is to be extended as widely as possible.

There is to be greater separation of the functions of State and Party, though at the same time conference decided, after a vigorous discussion, that the role of the Soviets and other representative bodies would be enhanced if the first secretaries of the respective Party committees were nominated to chair these committees. Not appointed, but nominated. They would still have to face election.

There is also to be a change at the top echelon of government. Fifteen hundred delegates will in future be elected, as they are now to the Supreme

Soviet, from the territorial and national districts, but to their number will be added approximately 750 deputies elected at the congresses or plenary sessions of the governing bodies of party, trade union, co-operative, youth, women's, veterans', academic and artistic organisations. All these deputies, elected for a five-year term, will comprise the new representative supreme government body — the Congress of the USSR People's Deputies. From its members the Congress of People's Deputies will elect a relatively small bicameral USSR Supreme Soviet which will function as a standing legislative, administrative and monitoring body. It will also elect by secret ballot the President of the Supreme Soviet — a post which is generally accepted will be filled by the Party's General Secretary. The president will exercise overall guidance in the drafting of legislation and of major socio-economic programmes, decide on key issues of foreign policy, defence and national security and discharge other functions traditionally associated with the presidency.

The conference also adopted resolutions for the overhaul and reform of the legal system, the judiciary and the militia "to consolidate the guarantees of the political, economic and social rights and freedoms of the Soviet people".

The conference recommended that the reorganisation of the Party apparatus should be completed by the end of this year, that the new Congress of People's Deputies should be installed by April 1989 and the election of the Soviets in the regions and republics be completed by the autumn of 1989.

These measures will bring about sweeping changes in Soviet society. There will be a parliament in permanent session where, if the 19th Conference is anything to judge by, open debate and questioning will be the order of the day. The revival of the Soviets, elections by secret ballot for most offices in State and Party — all these measures are designed to strengthen the links between the Party and the people and to prevent the re-emergence of any form of leadership cult or bureaucratic despotism. But, Gorbachev warned,

> "It would be naive to assume that a thoroughly renewed society will emerge overnight, of its own accord, through moral purification, substantiated criticism, and a break with the worthless past. No, the dialectic of consciousness and practice is immeasurably more complicated".

No More Purges

Arguing against those who called for a purge of the party membership and drastic punishment for all those held responsible not only for the shortcomings of the past but also for the sabotage of the *perestroika* drive today, Gorbachev said:

> "Now, what if the Central Committee resumes the old practice and starts firing bureaucrats? It won't work. Enough is enough. Nothing can be done from above. Now, we must encourage the whole nation to progress. We have our economic reform for that. Then, there's the reform of our whole political system, moral improvement and, last but not least, our mass media. If our society gets going, our whole country will be too hot for bureaucrats. That's what they are afraid of. But if they have to do only with other bosses, they'll come out unscathed. They'll offer arguments by the dozen, and drown us in torrents of words — the way they did ten and twenty years ago — and we'll give the matter up.
>
> "It isn't all that important to be a nice chap for all to like you. What matters is the political line you pursue in the interests of the whole nation and the socialist cause. The entire population must be involved in all the processes. It's strong enough to put things right".

But while stressing that he aimed at "a socialist plurality of opinion", Gorbachev denied that this would lead to a weakening of the leading role of the Communist Party. "We do not abandon the role of the ruling party in the country. On the contrary, we want to reaffirm it", he said. He was not for pluralism of parties, but for pluralism within the Communist Party. "The tasks of *perestroika* cannot be accomplished without the guiding activity of the Party".

In a number of his recent speeches Gorbachev has stressed that policies both internally and internationally can only succeed if they are based on freedom of choice. The people must be involved in the framing and administration of policies. Nothing must be imposed from above.

International Policy

The implications of the "new thinking" emanating from the CPSU deserve the closest scrutiny from the international community. Here are some extracts from Gorbachev's opening address to the 19th Conference on the theme of "Democratising International Relations":

"We have to acknowledge that command methods of administration did not spare the field of foreign relations either. It sometimes happened that even decisions of vital importance were taken by a narrow circle of people without collective, comprehensive examination or analysis, on occasion without properly consulting friends either. This led to an inadequate reaction to international events and to the policies of other states, if not to mistaken decisions..." (Was the decision to intervene in Afghanistan one of them? In a briefing to the representatives of the foreign party press in Moscow after the 19th Conference, Anatoli Dobrynin, head of the International Department of the CPSU, said the decision was taken at an "incomplete meeting of the Political Bureau".)

Gorbachev's address continued: "As we analyse the contemporary world, we realise more clearly that international relations, without losing their class character, are increasingly coming to be precisely relations between nations. We notice the enhanced role in world affairs of peoples, nations, and emerging new national entities. And this implies that there is no ignoring the diversity of interests in international affairs. Consideration for these interests is an important element of the new political thinking....

"We have sought a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between working-class interests and those of humanity as a whole, an idea built into Marxism from the outset. This led to the conclusion that common human values have a priority in our age, this being the core of the new political thinking. The new political thinking has enabled us to appreciate more fully how vitally important to contemporary international relations are the moral values that have over the centuries been evolved by nations, and generalised and spelled out by humanity's great minds....

"We have begun to base our contacts in relations between states on dialogue....

"A key factor in the new thinking is the concept of freedom of choice. We are convinced that this is a universal principle for international relations at a time when the very survival of civilisation has become the principal problem of the world....

"The imposition of a social system, way of life, or policies from outside by any means, let alone military, are dangerous trappings of past epochs. Sovereignty and independence, equal rights and non-interference are becoming universally recognised rules of international relations....To oppose freedom of choice is to come out against the objective tide of history itself. That is why power politics in all their forms and manifestations are historically obsolescent".

At the same time, Gorbachev denied that he had any illusions. "Have the imperialist sources of aggression and war vanished? No we do not forget about the threat to peace issuing from imperialist militarism and consider that there are no guarantees as yet that the positive processes that have begun are irreversible. The new political thinking, in fact, enables us to see and find new opportunities for opposing policies of strength on a broader political basis than in the past."

World Communist Movement

What are the implications of this "new thinking" in relation to what are loosely described as "regional conflicts"? We see that Soviet troops are being withdrawn from Afghanistan, that talks are under way for settlements in Kampuchea, Angola and Nicaragua. What about the situation in the Middle East? And in our own South Africa? These questions were hardly debated at the 19th CPSU Conference in Moscow. The attention of the delegates was overwhelmingly focussed on their own past, present and future, and the likelihood is that it will continue to be so focussed until the present pre-crisis situation has been resolved.

Gorbachev stressed that the internationalist outlook of the CPSU remained unaltered. The CPSU, he said, regarded itself as an inalienable part of the world Communist movement which was at present conducting a difficult quest for the way forward to a new stage in its historical development.

> "We will — on the basis of absolutely equal rights and respect — take an active part in this quest. There is a growing international potential in our new relations with numerous civic forces representing world science and culture, with political parties of a different ideological orientation, above all with Socialists, Social Democrats, Labour Party members, and other circles and movements of what is known as the Left. Our solidarity with the working people of the whole world, with the fighters against colonialism, racism and reaction is unflinching".

There was also considerable discussion at the Conference of the national question — inevitable in view of developments in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorny Karabakh, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Estonia and elsewhere. Representatives of Party delegations from all the trouble spots held press conferences during the course of the Conference and faced searching examination from the foreign pressmen who had assembled to cover the conference. It is hoped to deal with these issues in a later issue of *The African Communist.*

A resolution on the national question passed by the Conference noted the past violations of Leninist principles on nationality policy, the breaches of the rule of law during the period of the personality cult and by the ideology and psychology of stagnation which had led to the present undesirable manifestations. The Conference called for the creation of standing committees on ethnic relations under the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Supreme Soviets of the union and autonomous republics and wherever necessary under local Soviets. It also declared that the establishment of a special state body for nationalities and national relations should be considered. The whole question of national relations is to be the subject of a special plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU in the near future. In his opening address, Gorbachev had declared:

> "We see socialism as a system of the true equality of all nations and nationalities, a system in which they are assured social and spiritual advancement and mutual

enrichment, in which there is no room for strife between nations, for nationalist and chauvinist prejudices, and in which internationalism and the fraternity of nations rule supreme."

What Did the Conference Achieve?

The Conference cannot be seen in isolation, but must be viewed in the context of the whole drive for *perestroika* which is being conducted by the Party. Soviet society is being overhauled, and in the process every aspect of Soviet life is being examined under the microscope. In terms of the policy of *glasnost*, nothing is sacrosanct, everything is open to scrutiny. Bureaucrats may still practise secrecy, but the media are questioning everything, and abuses past and present are being investigated with an assiduity which some "conservatives" feel borders on hysteria and constitutes a threat to security. But the Party is sticking to its guns. Gorbachev in his report stressed again and again that respect for the truth must govern all Party members in their adoption and implementation of policies, and one of the final resolutions adopted by the Conference endorsed Lenin's notion that "the masses should know everything, that they should have an opportunity to judge about everything, and to be aware of what they are accepting". The resolution condemned what it described as "communist arrogance" on the part of those striving to hold back information and called for the right of citizens to information to be enshrined in the constitution. *Glasnost* was essential if the national and international policies of the CPSU were to be carried out effectively, said the resolution.

If friends of the Soviet Union abroad are puzzled by some of the reports coming out of the Soviet Union today, so are many of the Soviet people themselves. For one thing, many Soviet people are learning things about the Soviet past (and present for that matter) which they never knew before. They are learning about shortcomings and crimes which were previously concealed, and they are often horrified. Their opinions about themselves and their past and future are being revised; they are shedding illusions and coming to terms with reality. Some of the revelations were made at the 19th Conference itself, in the spirit of criticism and self-criticism which has always been a Party principle, formerly practised behind closed doors but now conducted in the open.

All this is healthy, but is often misunderstood. We are not used to this Communist pluralism of opinion. When Yeltsin and Ligachev slug it out on the conference floor, who speaks for the Party? And it is not only at conferences that division of opinion is expressed. When a Goncharov or a

Starushenko discourses on Southern Africa, is he voicing his own opinion or the views of the Central Committee? Until recently it was the custom not to deviate from the Party line and if the issue was uncertain comrades preferred to remain silent rather than cause problems. The 19th CPSU Conference resolution on *glasnost,* however, affirmed the right of every Soviet citizen to "open and free discussion of any socially significant issue", without which it would be impossible to "secure the dynamic and committed support of the working people for the *perestroika* policy of the CPSU".

The monolithic unity which may have been essential to see the CPSU through the dangers of the civil war, collectivisation and industrialisation, the Second World War and the post-war reconstruction is no longer necessary, thanks to the overall development of Soviet land and people. Now socialist plurality of opinions and democratisation are considered essential for the futher development of Soviet society. But does that mean that the CPSU is belittling the great achievements of the past? By no means. In his speech on November 2 last year celebrating the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, Mikhail Gorbachev said:

> "History has known no other period like it (the last 70 years) for the scale of the achievements that our country has accomplished since the victory of the October Revolution. The jubilee is a moment of pride. Pride in what has been achieved."

Perhaps not so much was heard on this theme during the 19th CPSU Conference, but then this was not the occasion. Nevertheless, many delegates, in calling for criticism of the Party to be balanced, by implication revealed their desire that the positive achievements of the past should be properly acknowledged. From this point of view, the 19th CPSU Conference, far from registering the strife and division among Party members which many of the Western media had been forecasting, provided a striking demonstration of Party unity, a unity made more secure by the open expression of differing viewpoints in public debate, and the adoption of resolutions by open vote in which minority viewpoints, having been ventilated, were decisively rejected. The authority of the Party was reinforced, not weakened by its adoption of democratic procedures. As Gorbachev told his Polish comrades, summing up the achievements of the Conference in a speech to the Polish Parliament in Warsaw on July 11:

> "We have discarded without regret the routine of the past when 'absolute truths' were proclaimed from speakers' rostrums and all that remained for delegates to do was to applaud and vote 'yes'. Today times are different".

The principle of democratic centralism was specifically reaffirmed — the fullest possible discussion beforehand, and once a vote is taken, the obligation on the minority to carry out the majority decision. In opening up the Party, Gorbachev aims to strengthen its leading role, not undermine it. In his main speech to the 19th Conference, he said under the heading: "Democratisation of the Leading Role and Internal Activity of the CPSU":

> "I wish to tell the delegates at this conference and the people at large the main thing: the tasks of *perestroika* cannot be accomplished without the guiding activity of the Party, without giving effect to its political course. Without all this *perestroika* will be doomed politically, ideologically and organisationally. At this turning point the CPSU should fully perform its functions and accomplish its tasks as the leading force in society".

We in the South African liberation movement can learn a great deal from the experience of the CPSU: the lessons of struggle, of triumph over adversity, of achievement, of the cult of the individual, of democratisation. The revolution of *perestroika* and *glasnost* has something to teach us too. We have no need to fear it or its outcome. Far from disintegrating, as the Western press try to make out, the Soviet Party remains strong, in full control of developments. And the 19th CPSU Conference has made it stronger and more confident about its objectives and the means of achieving them. The measure of its confidence is reflected in its decision to place its trust, not in weapons or restrictive devices, but in the people, in the Soviet Union and abroad, whose mobilisation will determine the outcome, not only of *perestroika,* but also of the issues of war and peace which confront humanity today.

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The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men and that the educator must himself be educated.

Marx: *Theses on Feuerbach,* 1845.

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A UNITED FRONT IS IMPERATIVE TO DEFEAT THE APARTHEID REGIME

by Eric Stilton

In his article, "For a Broad Coalition of Anti-Apartheid Forces" (*African Communist,* Third Quarter 1988), Denga analyses the principal political conditions which have brought the question of the unification of the anti-apartheid opposition to the forefront of our struggle for a national democratic transformation.

These conditions are: (a) the emergence of a powerful mass democratic movement, based on the trade unions, community and political organisations, which projects a future based on the Freedom Charter; (b) the existence of a regime which, by its policies, increasingly establishes itself 'as the enemy of practically the "whole nation",' (Denga, p.66) and thereby (c) brings a range of groups — sporting, religious, business and others — and political organisations into varying degrees of opposition to the government and, indeed, the apartheid system.

In these circumstances, the task facing the democratic movement is to deepen the isolation of the regime and weaken its capacity to resist the struggle for a national democratic state. This can be accomplished by finding common ground with the forces which 'are broadly speaking or potentially anti-apartheid' and by raising their consciousness in order to turn them into 'staunch participants in the struggle for national democracy'. (Denga, p.65).

We are obliged to recognise, however, that at least some of the social forces with whom a coalition has to be forged may not become 'staunch participants' either because they have more limited goals or because they have a different conception of the goal of the revolutionary struggle. This, of course, poses questions about the class basis of the possible participants in a coalition and, correspondingly, the limits of the coalition.

Class and National Struggle

The question of whether or not the working class should enter into alliances with other classes in the course of the struggle for social transformation is an old one which has arisen, at one time or another, in revolutionary situations in different countries in the capitalist epoch.

For some political movements, the idea that the working class requires the support of other classes to win state power and that, therefore, alliances are a political necessity, is rejected from the beginning. From this perspective *class* alliances are rejected in principle because the working class is the sole revolutionary force and it must 'go it alone'. Alliances with the middle strata and/or petit bourgeoisie entail a serious risk, according to this approach — the risk that the revolutionary objectives of the struggle will be adulterated by petit bourgeois ideologies and policies. Class alliances entail the danger that the working class will lose its ascendancy and hence the revolution will be captured by the middle class for its own ends.

This is particularly so where race/nationalism and class intertwine as in South Africa for, according to this approach, the pervasiveness of racial oppression masks the fact that different black classes have different interests in the result of the struggle against apartheid. Thus, the goal of the working class is socialism, that of the petit bourgeoisie capitalism but the common repudiation of racial domination obscures this and creates the conditions in which the goals of the latter will be realised on 'the back' of the workers' struggles.

While, of course, this outcome is a *possibility,* nevertheless, for us, class alliances are a fundamental necessity and the particular form they will take has to be understood in terms of the specific conditions which exist in South Africa.

What gives South Africa its particular structure, colonialism of a special type (CST), is the fact that the racial institutional and ideological order serves to a greater or lesser degree to subordinate all black classes in a system which unevenly advantages all white classes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

CST principally subordinates the majority African population. Thus,

> "The main content of the present stage of the South African revolution is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed group — the African people." (*ANC Speaks,* p.195).

But, the other black peoples are also subject to national oppression. That is to say, the black people as a whole — all classes — are subordinated and dominated by the structures of colonialism of a special type.

This cross-class effect of CST etablishes the structural basis for the ANC's view of the social forces that *may* be mobilised in the struggle for the overthrow of the apartheid system and its replacement by a national democratic state. The common subordination of.all black classes to CST creates the *possibility* that all these classes may be drawn into an alliance against the apartheid state.

Contradictions Continue

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that the political commitment of different black classes, or sections of these classes, to the mass democratic opposition varies according to their specific economic and political conditions of existence and is affected by the strategies of the regime and corporate capital, aimed at coopting them by means of 'reforms'. In short, race domination does not impose a complete uniformity of interest on the black people as a whole and it does not eliminate contradictions between the classes of which the black communities are composed.

Thus, on the one hand, the black working class is the leading force in the struggle for the national democratic state not only because of its degree of exploitation but also because it is the most numerous, best organised and most politically conscious class. For it, the national democratic revolution must mean not only the defeat of CST, but also the establishment of conditions favourable for a continuous process of social transformation. As the Morogoro Conference document stated:

> "The perspective of a speedy progression from formal liberation to genuine and lasting emancipation is made more real by the existence in our country of a large and growing working class whose class consciousness complements national consciousness. Its political organisations and the trade unions have played a fundamental role in shaping and advancing our revolutionary cause. It is historically understandable that the doubly-oppressed and doubly-exploited working class constitutes a reinforcing layer of our liberation struggle . . ." (*ANC Speaks,* p.189).

On the other hand, certain sections of some black classes have become aligned across the 'colonial' boundary with sections of white classes and the regime. In particular, although the growth of the Bantustan petit or bureaucratic bourgeoisie continues to be retarded by apartheid, nevertheless it owes such power as it holds and such resources as it is able to exploit to the patronage of the regime and big business. It grants to both an uneasy and uneven political and economic allegiance, and it must be recognised that fractions of these classes may have passed irreversibly over to the camp of the enemy.

Again, in the major urban areas, although black business displays a much more contradictory relationship to the regime and the big corporations, nonetheless its economic dependence on them is accompanied by, at least, an ambiguity and hesitancy in its political stance.

Strategy of Reform

To an important extent (apart from the exceptions mentioned above), the alignment of the Bantustan petit and bureaucratic bourgeoisie with the regime is fragile and may be reversible. Similarly, the ability of the regime to end the ambiguity of the black urban petit bourgeoisie and win its allegiance is highly questionable. The reason for this is that both depend, at least in part, on the successful implementation by the regime and corporate capital of reformist/cooptive strategies. These strategies, however, continually come up against both the economic constraints of an economy in recession due to political instability and the limiting effects of CST which continues to be reproduced not least because of the unyielding position of significant social forces among the whites.

It is important, therefore, to emphasise that, these black classes, or more accurately, sections of them, are *possible* allies of the liberation movement — their support can be won in the struggle to demolish apartheid, even if differences over 'final' goals remain. To quote Slovo:

> "The allegiance of the middle and upper black strata to the immediate objectives of the liberation struggle cannot be taken for granted; it has to be fought for on the ground . . . The alliance of the working class with forces which reject its long-term aspirations is never unproblematic and without tension. It requires constant vigilance . . ."

The alternative to a policy aimed at developing a coalition of anti-apartheid forces led by the working class is for the working class to abandon the leadership of the national liberation to other classes. Again, as Slovo has noted:

> "By rejecting class alliances and going it alone, the working class would in fact be surrendering the leadership of the national struggle to the upper and middle strata."

In brief, then, the working class must strive to build class alliances but it must do so on the basis of an analysis of the concrete position of classes and class fractions. This entails recognition of the fact that at one pole a class or a fraction of it may stand, quite irreconcilably, within the enemy camp, for example, reactionary white capital and the most reactionary section of the black bureaucratic bourgeoisie; at the other pole, the black working class is, for the most part, unequivocally a force for revolutionary transformation — even though there may be small elements which have placed themselves outside the national liberation movement. Between these two poles, a variety of convergences and contradictions of interests between the different classes and class fractions is possible.

This general specification of class relations provides the basis for the consideration of political coalitions between classes insofar as class interests are represented through political organisations.

Organisational Alliances and the United Front

At the level of political organisation, for the ultra-left, the question of alliances becomes highly simplified. These are only possible between organisations within the working class — the trade unions and the party defined by them as the revolutionary socialist party — since cross-class alliances, as has already been pointed out, are impermissible.

Even within this narrow context, however, alliances are problematic for ultra-left and 'workerist' parties. From their standpoint, the revolutionary party must maintain its 'purity' of purpose by keeping aloof from the corrupting influences of non-revolutionary trade unions and those left parties which they define as pursuing inherently wrong, petit bourgeois policies.

The ANC and the SACP, on the contrary, have increasingly stressed that an essential element necessary to bring about the defeat of the apartheid system is *the consolidation of the broadest possible unity of the oppositional forces.*

Excerpts from the January 8th statement of the ANC make this clear. On the one hand:

> "It is the task of the entire democratic movement to ensure that the UDF is strengthened and defended by all available means against the enemy's counter offensive. It is also of vital importance that we work to strengthen the links between this mass organisation of the people and other formations of the democratic movement.

> "Central to the process of strengthening the organised base of the mass democratic movement has been the emergence of such organisations as SAYCO, Women's Congress, Congress of Traditional Leaders, and the NADL. As we know, the further development of this unity has correctly taken place not only at the national but also at local and regional levels as well."

On the other hand, referring to the break up of white unity, the statement says:

> "Regardless of the distance that these new democrats have travelled towards genuinely democratic positions, the fact of their break with the perspective of white minority domination constitutes an important contribution to the common future we seek to build — of a South Africa that will belong to all South Africans regardless of race or colour. The meeting held in Dakar will always remain one of the benchmarks in the efforts of our people to unite against the apartheid system.
>
> "Our central task is to organise and mobilise our people . . . This means that we must continue to build the broadest possible united front against apartheid . . . Let the fact of the united opposition of millions of our people . . . *find expression both in united action and action within a united front.*"

Is there a difference between 'united action' and 'action within a united front'? In Denga's article the notion of 'coalition' seems to refer, without distinction, to both. It is important, however, to distinguish between different forms of coalition which involve varying degrees of unity and commitment between the organisational forces involved.

There is a vast difference between a *short-term alliance* between organisations united in joint action over immediate objectives such as, for example, opposition to industrial relations legislation or even the defeat of the regime, and a *programmatic alliance* based on a long-term programme such as the Freedom Charter. In South Africa today the task is to forge a *united front,* capable of bringing down the regime, between organisations involved in a programmatic alliance and those organisations with whom short-term alliances are possible.

Levels of Opposition

Concretely, we can distinguish four 'levels' of the anti-apartheid opposition:

First, *the revolutionary alliance,* consisting of the African National Congress at its head, the South African Communist Party and the South African Congress of Trade Unions constitutes the necessary core of the united front. These organisations share a common programme which is contained in the *Freedom Charter.*

Within this *unity* there are also *differences* both in function and policy. The leadership role of the ANC derives from its capacity to organise all classes against the apartheid system; the SACP defines its primary role in relation to the working class and strives to ensure the political predominance of the working class in the revolutionary alliance while SACTU works to link the trade union movement with the alliance.

For the ANC, the goal of the struggle is the national democratic revolution as defined by the Freedom Charter. Although the SACP recognises the Freedom Charter as a major political guideline, it is a socialist party and has long-term socialist aims. For the Party, the national democratic revolution is a major and necessary step in that direction.

Second, *the broad national liberation movement* which is based on the revolutionary alliance, and includes the legal/semi-legal mass democratic organisations, in particular the UDF and COSATU, but also the National Education Crisis Committee and the progressive church and cultural organisations. Together these organisations share common national democratic goals and aims as represented by the Freedom Charter.

Within the broad *national liberation movement* the different organisations adopt different strategies. For instance, the ANC and SACP are restricted to underground and illegal actions and both are involved actively in the armed struggle. While COSATU and UDF, in order to maintain their organisations, may have to adopt some of the methods of underground work they are not themselves underground organisations. Their task is to mobilise and organise the widest possible membership.

For various reasons, including the problem of legality, the broad national liberation movement does not have formal joint co-ordinating structures. Both COSATU and UDF do, of course, along with other organisations hold talks and consult with the ANC and both recognise the ANC's overall political leadership of the national liberation movement.

Despite the strength of the unity within the movement, there are differences and contradictions in both detailed policies and strategy yet there are no fundamental conflicts. We might characterise the broad national liberation movement by saying that *it is a contradictory unity in which the contradictions are subordinated to the unity of purpose* to achieve the goals of the Freedom Charter.

Yet, third, it is otherwise in the relationship between the broad national liberation movement and the *organisations of the people outside of that movement.*

The obvious cases here are bodies such as NACTU and AZAPO. Between these organisations, and in particular their mass membership, and the broad national liberation movement there is complete agreement about the need to overthrow the apartheid system and to instal a democratic regime dedicated to revolutionary transformation of the apartheid system.

But there are important differences which revolve around the question of class alliances, the possibilities of unity with democratic whites, the place of the armed struggle, the conception of SA as a racial capitalism rather than CST, the relationship between the national democratic revolution and the struggle for socialism, the ideological character and class orientation of the ANC/SACP alliance, the role of the trade unions, and so on.

Here the contradictions have up to the present tended to dominate and the common goal has so far been insufficient to bring about any substantial unity in action.

But There Is Common Ground

In the recent period, the problem of placing the differences in perspective, especially as these keep the masses who share a common goal divided, has come to the fore. Therefore, while acknowledging the differences, it has come to be recognised that the common ground for an alliance, at least in the first place, on specific issues leading perhaps to a broader, more programmatically based united front programme must be found.

The issue was posed at the recent COSATU Conference. The central debate revolved around the question of joint action with NACTU.

In the course of the debate, it was argued that alliances were only possible on the basis of the acceptance of the Freedom Charter. That is to say, only programmatic alliances are acceptable and no room is to be allowed for short-term alliances. To insist on this means, of course, that united action with organisations such as NACTU continues to remain impossible.

The ANC defined a different position at its recent meeting with NACTU. The meeting was followed by a joint statement '. . *stressing that the issue of the Freedom Charter should not be a stumbling block to unity'*.

"Unity on the ground" between members of the rival federations could be built through "grass roots" participation in common campaigns, according to John Nkadimeng, President of SACTU. 'Asked if this meant that the ANC believed groups like AZAPO and NACTU, who oppose the Freedom Charter, should cooperate with COSATU and the UDF who have adopted the Freedom Charter, Nkadimeng said: "That is exactly what the united front stands for. It is something that brings people together to face a common enemy. They do not have to agree 100% with each other."

What the ANC/NACTU statement recognises at last is that common opposition to the regime based on common goals *must* pave the way for unity of all organisations of the people in action even where no programmatic alliance is possible. A coalition of the organisations of the broad national liberation movement and genuine organisations of the people outside the movement, (which therefore excludes the PAC) is an essential pre-requisite for the defeat of the regime.

The Role of White 'Dissidents'

There is, however, a fourth category of oppositional organisations with whom an alliance has become necessary — liberal organisations such as the Five Freedoms Forum, IDASA and the National Democratic Movement which have broken with the apartheid system.

The academic Tom Lodge has argued in *Work in Progress* that the effect of state repression, the tendency to force action back into local politics and the fragmentation of the whites may have brought 'alliance politics' to the fore i.e. alliances with whites. As Lodge puts it:

> "It may not be possible to persuade more than an active minority of whites to join the camp of liberation politics. But a much larger proportion may have their fears lessened if movements like the UDF actively co-operate with forces and organisations which, in white political culture, have institutional respectability. A large proportion of whites may be receptive to the leadership of a broad front around *the call for negotiations.*"

He may be right about what has brought alliance politics to the fore, but that it should somehow take as its principal objective the whites and negotiations is to miss the point.

The point is not unity at all costs — in this case the policy of negotiation — but alliances on commonly accepted tactics of opposition. It should be remembered that it is the strength of the national liberation movement which has posed the problem of alliances between white 'dissidents' and the broad movement. For the most part, however, that will entail specific co-operation on specific measures rather than a programmatically based united front.

In South Africa today, a coalition of forces made up, on the one hand of the organisations programmatically united in the broad national democratic movement, and on the other of organisations with which the former shares the short-term goal of dislodging the regime and the foundations of the apartheid system, has become an imperative for the defeat of the regime.

It goes without saying that the revolutionary alliance must struggle to ensure that the hegemony of its programmatic principles based on the fundamental interests and leading role of the working class is maintained in the context of the coalition.

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

by Dialego

Historically Trotskyism belongs to the tradition of what the Marxist classics call 'utopian' rather than 'scientific socialism'. It is a form of ultra-leftism which promotes pseudo-revolutionary principles at the expense of practical politics. Its basic appeal is to those who are politically isolated and whose position in society distances them from what Marx called 'the stern and steeling school of labour' — the collective discipline of production itself.

Its most durable roots are to be found therefore among the radical intelligentsia and the 'middle strata'. As such, it expresses the frustration and impatience of those who 'sympathise' with the workers but cannot find a practical way of helping them.

In South Africa Trotskyism has traditionally found most support among the coloured intellectuals of the Western Cape, but more recently Trotskyist ideas have also become evident among radical white circles in the English-speaking universities. Those who champion, for example, the cause of 'workerism' against so-called 'populism' betray (consciously or otherwise) a bias towards Trotskyism.

Trotskyism in South Africa (as elsewhere) has the following characteristics. It opposes the democratic revolution as a distinct phase in the struggle for socialism; it is unable to get to grips with the national question; its theoretical dogmatism prevents it from coherently distinguishing between the 'form' and 'content' of class struggle, and its abstract view of politics encourages elitist and anarchist styles of organisation.

To understand more about Trotskyism and the part it plays in the struggle against apartheid, we need to know something about the Russian revolutionary from whom this political trend takes its name.

A Man of Rare Abilities?

Trotsky was born in the Ukraine in 1879, the son of a provincial Jewish landowner. He was educated in Odessa where he developed a passion for literature and letters. He became involved in socialist activity in 1897 and, as a result, the Tsarist authorities sentenced him to two years in prison, followed by four years' exile to Siberia. He escaped to London where he impressed Lenin as a 'man of rare abilities' who 'will go much farther'[1].

The differences between the two however soon became apparent. In 1902 Trotsky denounced Lenin's view of the party in *What is to be Done?* as elitist and authoritarian. Identifying Lenin as 'the leader of the reactionary wing of our party',[2] he sided with the Mensheviks when the Russian socialists divided in 1903. Two years later he made dramatic speeches to the Petrograd Soviet during the 1905 Revolution, but (like the Mensheviks) he opposed the call for armed revolution and played no part in the bitter street battles in Moscow.

Thereafter he became an 'independent', vainly seeking to persuade the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks to sink their differences. Although Trotskyists were later to depict Trotsky as Lenin's 'natural successor' in fact it was only in April 1917 that he joined the Bolshevik Party. Nevertheless, Trotsky did play an important role (as Stalin himself acknowledged) in the October Revolution, and as a Minister in the new Soviet government, he contributed energetically to the victory of the Red Army during the civil war.

But the differences with Lenin were far from over. Lenin was angered by Trotsky's opposition to the Brest Litovsk treaty in 1918 (when the new Soviet Government was forced to yield substantial land to imperial Germany) and he disagreed sharply with Trotsky over the trade unions (where Trotsky favoured 'militarising' the Soviet workers).

Exile and Opposition to the Comintern

After Lenin's death, Trotsky became a bitter critic of Stalin's leadership. He greatly exaggerated the prospects of revolutionary change in Germany in 1923 and in Britain during the General Strike of 1926. He condemned Bolshevik strategy in China, and two years later was sent into exile after leading street demonstrations against the Soviet government.

It is true that in exile Trotsky was critical of the sectarian positions taken by the international communist movement (the Comintern) between 1929 and 1933 — a sectarianism which greatly damaged the Communist Party in South Africa, for example, during this period. Nevertheless he was (it would seem even more) vehemently opposed to the democratic Popular Front strategy which the Comintern had adopted by 1935 as a way of tackling these political weaknesses.

In 1938 Trotsky formed his own tiny Fourth International (which has divided and subdivided many times since). Although the Popular Fronts played a key role in the struggle against fascism (particularly in Spain and France), they were denounced by Trotsky and his International as one of 'the political resources of imperialism in the struggle against proletarian revolution'[3] — shades of Neville Alexander's criticisms of the UDF! Until his death in 1940, Trotsky remained hostile to the Comintern, and continued to agitate vigorously for the overthrow of the 'counter-revolutionary bureaucracy' (i.e. the government!) of the USSR.

While most communists today would no longer accept the view (current during the Stalin period) that Trotsky was 'an agent of fascism', few would deny that throughout his life Trotsky hindered rather than helped the struggle for socialism.

The Two Versions of Permanent Revolution

Trotsky is perhaps best known for his theory of 'permanent revolution'. This theory lies at the heart of Trotskyism. It explains why Trotsky was unable to work with Lenin before the Russian Revolution and with the new Soviet Government after it. It also explains why Trotsky's South African followers are either openly hostile to the Freedom Charter or (as we have seen more recently) may profess to support the Charter while interpreting it in a sectarian and divisive fashion.

What complicates this question is the fact that there is not one theory of permanent revolution but two. Marx and Engels themselves elaborated a theory of permanent revolution in *The Communist Manifesto,* but their theory differs fundamentally from the version of permanent revolution championed by Leon Trotsky.

Permanent revolution for Marx and Engels presented a perspective in which (in the words of the *Manifesto*), the bourgeois revolution is 'the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution'. Lenin reaffirmed this perspective in 1905 when he declared that 'from the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength . . . begin to pass to the socialist revolution'.[4] In other words, as far as the Marxist classics are concerned, the permanent or 'uninterrupted' revolution proceeds in *phases*. The phases are of course linked since one is a prelude or precondition for the other. But — and this is the decisive point — the democratic revolution comes *first*.

The Democractic Revolution and the Bourgeoisie

It is this proposition which Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution rejects. Trotsky took the view that unless the revolution is socialist in character and immediately establishes 'a dictatorship of the proletariat', it will fail. The capitalists (in alliance with the bourgeois minded peasantry) will inevitably sabotage the democratic revolution.[5]

This, it should be said, was not a new objection. Even in 1848 Marx's theory of a *phased* revolutionary process had been opposed by those members of the Communist League who wanted a 'one-step' revolutionary strategy. They argued then (as Trotsky and his followers were to argue later) that a democratic revolution can only benefit the capitalists.

But this is merely a half-truth. Marxists have never denied that as a result of the democratic revolution, some capitalists (usually the smaller ones with national roots) benefit. Lenin acknowledged this in Russia, and Nelson Mandela has made the same point about the Freedom Charter (as the critics of the liberation movement are never tired of pointing out).[6] The fact that oppressed sections of the bourgeoisie will benefit should hardly surprise us — after all, as Lenin stressed, 'the democratic revolution is bourgeois in nature'. It is not a proletarian revolution: it is a revolution of 'the whole people'.[7]

The real point however is that ultimately it is the workers who will gain. If the democratic revolution is spearheaded by the working class as the leader of a dynamic and united popular movement, then it becomes possible to move in a 'uninterrupted' fashion from the struggle for democracy to the construction of socialism. The one revolution passes over into the other; the revolution becomes *permanent*.

This explains the fact that South African communists prefer to speak of a 'national democratic' rather than a 'bourgeois democratic' revolution, lest the latter is taken to imply a bourgeois revolution led by the bourgeoisie which merely entrenches capitalism. In a South Africa dominated by foreign and domestic monopoly capital (which connive with the colonial autocracy), the destruction of apartheid is only possible through a democratic revolution spearheaded by the *working class* — a revolution which unleashes a momentum that will compel a democratic South Africa to set it sights on the building of socialism.

The Fairy Tale Revolutionaries

This is why Lenin always insisted that socialism can only come through democracy. It is only through *democratic* struggle that workers acquire the experience, the confidence and the wider popular support necessary if they are to become the ruling class of the new society. Trotsky's 'major mistake' — as Lenin commented — was his failure to develop a 'clear conception' of the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution.[8] His mystical belief was that workers can somehow or other pole-vault themselves into socialism.

This 'major mistake' continues to be made by Trotskyists in South Africa today. Take the case of *Inqaba yaba Sebenzi* — which fancifully calls itself the 'Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC'. This trend reflects the position of those Trotskyists who espouse the conspiratorial tactic of 'entryism' and who (rather like Trotsky in 1917) feel that the solution to their political isolation is to secretively 'enter' organisations whose basic strategy they reject.

Ostensibly supporting the democratic movement, *Inqaba* continually exhorts the ANC leadership to 'openly proclaim a programme of proletarian revolution as the only basis on which the demands of the Freedom Charter can be carried through'.[9] Like Trotsky before them, the 'workerists' in South Africa get the relationship between socialism and democracy precisely wrong. Only fairy tale revolutionaries believe that workers can *first* achieve socialism and *then* set about establishing the conditions which would make this revolution possible. It is rather like arriving at your destination and then looking around for the transport to get you there. It can't be done!

The permanent revolution of 1917 bears this out. The *socialist* revolution in October was made possible by the *democratic* revolution in February. Even though the democratic stage only lasted around six months, it proved vital in enabling the Bolsheviks to win a majority of the population to their side. Despite his claim to the contrary, the Russian Revolution proved to be a practical refutation of Trotsky's theory, and it is not surprising that no revolution has ever taken place in accordance with the mystifying principles of Trotskyist logic.

Permanent Revolution and the National Question

Trotsky complemented his sectarian attitude towards democracy with the astonishing argument that revolution could only succeed in Russia if it is 'united with the socialist proletariat of Western Europe'.[10] Revolution within a 'national framework' is doomed. On its own it will collapse. Only world revolution is possible. It is not difficult to see why this analysis made it almost impossible for Trotsky to contribute constructively to tackling the problems of post-revolutionary Russia — once it had become clear that revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries (despite the uprisings in Germany and Hungary) were not going to succeed.

Trotsky's all-or-nothing approach to world revolution reflected more than naive optimism. It stemmed from his failure to get to grips with the national question. Class struggle, as the *Communist Manifesto* emphasises, is international in substance, but national in form. It is precisely because socialism arises through the struggle for democracy, that the working class must represent the interests of the nation as a whole. Winning 'the battle of democracy' as a prelude to the struggle for socialism is only possible if the proletariat becomes 'the leading class of the nation .

Ignore the democratic revolution and you ignore the national framework within which every class struggle necessarily occurs. This is the point which Trotsky and his followers have never understood. The proletariat of each country must first settle accounts with its own bourgeoisie.

The Problem of Form

Trotskyists then have a problem. This problem becomes particularly acute in countries (like South Africa) where the democratic revolution itself has not yet taken place so that workers do not even enjoy a common citizenship with their exploiters. In theory Trotskyists should stand aloof from the struggle for national liberation since the logic of their position asserts that unless revolution is socialist in character and world-wide in its scope, betrayal and defeat is the inevitable consequence.

This logic impales Neville Alexander (and his fellow Trotskyists in the Cape Action League) on the horns of a painful dilemma. On the one hand they feel compelled (and quite rightly so!) to acknowledge the 'reality of racial prejudice and perceived differences'. On the other hand Alexander insists that ethnic and national groups (like those mentioned in the Freedom Charter) are merely the invention of the oppressor. They are like ghosts: why should we take them seriously simply because some people believe in them?

The South African nation itself — struggling to arise from the ashes of apartheid — is, Alexander concedes, perfectly real. Yet the elements out of which this nation is to be forged do not themselves exist! The absurdity of this position is all but conceded by Alexander when he *also* tells us that 'national consciousness, clearly, belongs to the same genus as ethnic or race consciousness.'[11] For what this means is that the ethnic or national groups which make up the nation are as real (or unreal) as the *nation* itself. Alexander's ghosts return to haunt him!

As a Trotskyist he is opposed to the democratic revolution. Hence he rejects the Freedom Charter. On the other hand, he cannot deny (even though he is clearly bewildered by) the reality of national oppression. Hence he forges links with black consciousness organisations which also reject the Freedom Charter. The result? The thoroughly muddled argument that the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for socialism are one and the same, and that the force leading the struggle is the *black* working class.

An astonishing argument for someone who professes to be a Marxist. For 'blackness', as has often been pointed out, is not a scientific concept in social analysis. It is a rough and ready label which identifies form. The 'ideological forms' through which struggle occurs are of the utmost importance (as the Marxist classics emphasise) but they are 'ideological forms' because they can only tell us 'how' revolutions take place. They do not and cannot explain 'why' struggles occur. To link an ethnic category to a scientific term like 'class' in the way Alexander does is to hopelessly confuse form and content — to muddle up the 'superstructure' with the 'base'.

The consequences are inevitably sectarian. The very call for a socialist 'Azania' seeks in typical Trotskyist fashion to 'skip' the democratic revolution. By making 'blackness' a criterion for assessing whether a class is revolutionary, the 'Azanian' formula ignores the role of that 'small section of the ruling class' which (as the *Communist Manifesto* puts it) cuts itself adrift and 'joins the revolutionary class'. In the South African context this extends to those whites from the dominant colonial bloc (if not necessarily from the ruling monopoly capitalist class) who turn their back on apartheid and support the democratic revolution. In the name of socialism, Alexander's confused brand of Trotskyism necessarily cramps and distorts even the struggle for democracy.

The Trotskyist leaders of the All-Africa Convention (AAC) and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) had exactly the same problem in the 1940s. Political reality compelled them to take the national question into account, but the sectarian logic of their position prevented them from doing so in a way which was coherent and meaningful. Thus Isaac Tabata could claim that 'the real cleavage' in South Africa is one of class and not colour[12] and yet still argue for 'Non-Europeanness' as the defining attribute of a 'Unity' movement. The *form* of the struggle is dogmatically brushed aside with one hand — only to be brought back again (in an equally dogmatic way) with the other.

In a particularly revealing passage in his autobiography, Trotsky speaks rather grandly of his passion for 'the supremacy of the general over the particular'; his preference for general laws over the 'dull empiricism' of the facts.[13] Yet it was precisely this 'idealistic' reading of historical materialism that Engels attacked in the last years of life on the grounds that it neglects form for content — it uses the categories of historical materialism as a way of suppressing rather than engaging the 'factual' complexities of social life. The theoretical dogmatism of the Trotskyists makes it impossible to devote the kind of careful and consistent attention to the problem of form which is so essential to the struggle for national liberation.

Spontaneity and Organisation

The history of Trotskyism in South Africa is a history of splitting and squabbling, whether we think of the NEUM in the 1950s (when it fiercely opposed the Defiance Campaign for example) or the National Forum today.

Why is Trotskyism unable to forge coherent and united organisation? We commented earlier on the way in which Trotsky denounced Lenin's theory of the party in 1902. Whereas Lenin insisted that socialist ideas have to be brought in 'from the outside' in the sense that an overall revolutionary strategy needs to be coherently worked out by professional revolutionaries, Trotsky tended to ascribe revolutionary initiative to the 'will' of the working class.[14]

He was committed in other words to what Marxists call a 'spontaneist' view of the political process: a belief that workers have a kind of innate 'instinct' for revolution. In this view political understanding is not something which develops through democratic struggle: it is a metaphysical property which is always *there*. If workers do not instantly rise up in spontaneous revolt, then that is the fault of reactionary and bureaucratic leaders. Hence we see a 'spontaneist' like Trotsky continually vacillating between anarchism and elitism. An abstract view of the masses is linked to an equally abstract view of 'creative' leadership. Unable to organise a stable group of followers, Trotsky was (like his followers in South Africa) forever appealing for unity while indulging in factionalism.

'Spontaneism' may sound highly revolutionary to the politically inexperienced, but the truth is that it is rooted in an essentially liberal view of the world. When Neville Alexander tells Namibian students — in the name of 'anti-sectarianism' — that they should feel free *not* to join SWAPO, he confuses liberalism with democracy.[15] For spontaneity belongs to that whole family of concepts — toleration, individuality, free expression etc, — that have come to us via the liberal tradition. These concepts are important, but only when they *strengthen* (rather than weaken) the unity and cohesion of the democratic movement. Expressed abstractly — all on their own — they merely become disruptive and divisive.

This is why Moses Kotane, for example, argued in 1949 that a *unitary* national organisation for Africans was vital if the struggle against racism was to be effectively concentrated. The Trotskyist-inclined All Africa Convention on the other hand wanted a federal movement. There can be little doubt that Kotane and the other ANC leaders feared that a looser organisation would simply enable the AAC and the NEUM to continue with their doctrinaire brand of 'non-collaborationist' politics — regardless of what the movement as a whole had democratically decided.[16]

Undermining the Logic of Trotskyism by . . .

Trotskyism, as we have seen, has a logic which inclines its supporters to 'spontaneist' factionalism, abstract formulas and pseudo-revolutionary concepts. Nevertheless it does not follow that everything Trotskyists do or say is necessarily wrong. Trotsky himself played, as we have seen, a positive role during the Russian Revolution, and there were times (at the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921, for example) when he rejected ultra-leftism.

We have also seen how in the South African context most Trotskyists have had to recognise the importance of the national question, even though they have been unable to analyse it coherently. Marxists should not always assume therefore that Trotskyists cannot be won to play a constructive role. The more we can involve people who think of themselves as Trotskyists in on-going *democratic* struggle, the more we can undermine the sectarian and abstract logic of Trotskyism.

. . . Strengthening the Democratic Movement

There is a final question worth considering. Moses Kotane was to comment in 1954 that 'disruptive and harmful groupings' (and he specifically refers to the AAC and the NEUM) only come into being 'because of internal shortcomings and weaknesses'.[17] A crucial and pivotal observation.

Trotskyism acquires credibility and clout when democratic movements are weak and ineffectual.

An historical example to illustrate this point, Trotskyists like Tabata in the AAC and the (Trotskyist influenced) Cape African Teachers' Association were able to make an impact in the rural areas of the Transkei in the 1940s because (as Govan Mbeki vigorously pointed out at the time) the ANC had not been sufficiently concerned with 'organisation in the Reserves'.[18] The AAC itself had been formed in the 1930s as a broad organisation under the patronage of D.D.T. Jabavu to fight Hertzog's segregationalist laws. The relative ease with which this organisation was brought under Trotskyist control in the 1940s must surely have been linked to failure of the ANC at the time (and the CPSA which had also been involved in the formation of the AAC) to mount an effective attack on the government of the day.

Kotane's point echoes Lenin's famous comment in his critique of 'left-wing communism'. Leftist ideas are 'a kind of penalty' for 'opportunist sins'. It follows therefore that the best way of tackling Trotskyism is to strengthen the unity and vigour — and this must mean strengthening the working class leadership — of the democratic movement.

Only through revolutionary Marxist practice can we really puncture dogmatic and pseudo-revolutionary theorising. We need to draw into our ranks *all* who can contribute positively to the struggle against apartheid. In this way it might even be possible to move (at least some of) the Trotskyists themselves away from the sterile and self-defeating logic of Trotskyism.

Notes

1. Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, Penguin Books, 1975, p.158. The comment was made by Lenin in a letter to the Russian socialist Plekhanov. In Lenin's *Collected Works* 43, 1969, p.111 there is a rather more sober translation of Lenin's words!
2. Cited by M. Jonstone, *Trotsky: His Ideas*, Challenge Publications, 1968, p.6.
3. B. Reid, *Ultra-Leftism in Britain*, CPGB Pamphlet, 1969, p.10.
4. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* 6, p.519; Lenin, *Collected Works* (hereafter *CW*) 9, p.236.
5. Trotsky, *1905*, Penguin Books, 1971, p.331.
6. See, for example, Peter Hudson, 'The Freedom Charter and the Theory of National Democratic Revolution', *Transformation* 1, p.8.
7. Lenin *CW* 9, p.112; p.84.
8. *CW* 15, p.371.
9. *African Communist* 103, p.5.
10. Trotsky, *1905*, p.333.
11. *Sow the Wind*, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1985, pp.141-44.
12. *The All-Africa Covention: the Awakening of a People*, Johannesburg People's Press, 1950, p.6.
13. *My Life*, pp.90-1.

14. B. Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky,* Oxford University Press, 1978, p.250; p.383.
15. *Sow the Wind,* p.63; p.67. See the excellent review of Alexander's book in *New Era,* March-April 1986, pp.37-8.
16. Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge,* vol. 2, Stanford, California, 1971, p.385.
17. *South African Communists Speak,* Inkululeko, 1981, p.234.
18. S. Marks and S. Trapido, eds., *The Politics of Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa,* Longman, 1987, p.270.

AFRICA
NOTES & COMMENT

By Jabulani Mkhatshwa

ANGOLA: A MILITARY DEFEAT FOR THE RACISTS

At the time of going to press a series of rapid diplomatic developments, flowing out of the quadripartite talks between Angola, Cuba, South Africa's apartheid regime and the US, was taking place. To what extent the apartheid regime has finally accepted the defeat of its Angolan policy and the inevitability of genuine Namibian independence, or is imply manoeuvring for time, remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that these diplomatic events need to be understood against the background of a significant deterioration in the situation from the racists' point of view. There has been a dramatic shift in the military balance of power which has been forcefully underlined in southern Angola in the course of 1988.

Earlier this year, one morning at 9.35 a.m. Luanda time, a Cuban AN-26 transport plane carrying 26 people, among them Brigadier General Fransisco Cruz Bourazac, deputy minister for weaponry and equipment of the ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, was mistakenly shot down by the Cuban missile batteries stationed near the Tchamutete airport in southern Angola. It was a great loss. But this accident was a clear indicator that the military forces inside Angola were in a state of peak alert against the impending invasion of the South African army.

There was sufficient reason for this alert, as the communique issued by Angola's Ministry of Defence subsequently revealed. From the northern border of the country a Zairean cargo plane violated Angolan airspace by more than sixty kilometres from Luena. The following day, three Zairean Hercules C-130 aircraft landed troops within 150 km of Cabinda. An Angolan intelligence unit reported observing 45 paratroopers from one of the planes making preparations for manoeuvres on the border with Cabinda. Another intelligence source reported that in the Shaba province of Zaire (bordering with Angola), there was the biggest joint Zairean-United States military manoeuvres, with the participation of the 22nd Brigade of the Zairean armed forces, one US rapid deployment force and about 450 Unita bandits trained by Israel at the Kamina base.

From the south, the South African army, using G-5 artillery, bombarded the area of the bridge over the Cuito River in the Kubango province. Two days later, at 11.05 a.m. the SADF bombarded the Angolan troop (FAPLA) positions on the outskirts of Cuito Cuanavale, using the same artillery weapons. One Angolan soldier died. This military assault went on for more than a week. By then it was becoming clear to the Angolan military strategists that the racist army was attempting to take hold of this strategic area, possibly with the purpose of providing a safe launching base for the Unita bandits, who were having problems in their campaigns.

Unita's military problems were becoming a source of worry for both the apartheid regime and the United States administration. According to Luis Neto Kiambata, the Angolan Ambassador to Zambia, the US armed forces were "moving South African-backed Unita rebels from inside Angola to bases inside neighbouring Zaire." All along Unita had been transporting its personnel and equipment from its headquarters in southern Angola (at Jamba) to targets in the rest of the country. But, because of the losses inflicted by the Angolan army on Unita positions and personnel, the United States (according to Kiambata) was pressing Unita and Pretoria to dismantle the base at Jamba. Speaking in Lusaka, the ambassador said that US aircraft were ferrying Unita bandits and equipment to bases in Zaire in preparation for new attacks from Angola's northern border. "It is generally understood that American policy is to get Unita to work from Zaire in northern Angola to allow the US to control them better", he said. This move would also help distance Jonas Savimbi from the apartheid regime so that he could be included in the negotiating process with the Angolan government with the aim of creating what the US calls "a government of national unity".

Humiliating Defeat

By this time South African military aircraft were violating Angolan airspace and sending in their ground forces in support of Unita in big numbers. In the village of Capira, 26 km south-west of Tchipa, the SADF attacked the Territorial Troop company of FAPLA. Two days later a mixed South African/Unita force, probably Battalion 101, clashed with FAPLA south of Humbe resulting in the death of four Angolan soldiers and 25 South African racist soldiers plus the destruction of six of their Casspir armoured personnel carriers. One South African prisoner was captured, a sergeant in Battalion 101. This clash was an early demonstration that the military balance in the Angolan war was shifting in favour of Angola and her allies.

After assessing the seriousness of the situation created by the racists' new adventure, particularly their intention to occupy the town of Cuito Cuanavale, the leadership of the Cuban Party and government, in full agreement with the leadership of the MPLA Party of Labour and the Angolan government, decided to reinforce the Cuban internationalist contingent stationed in southern Angola with a few dozen advisers, pilots and experienced military specialists plus the necessary combat equipment to guarantee further the territorial integrity of Angola and her people. The reinforcement operation was carried out rapidly and efficiently; a strong group of motorized infantry units, tanks, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons were transferred at short notice to Angola, thus creating the most favourable conditions ever to confront the racist army of aggression.

Underestimating the revolutionary forces, the arrogant racist troops attempted to break Cuito Cuanavale's defence through the use of their long-range artillery. In response, a courageous and well co-ordinated counter-offensive was launched by the Angolan Cuban forces which decisively pushed back the racist troops almost to the border of Namibia.And given the undoubted stubbornness of the racist army and its tendency repeatedly to violate Angolan territorial integrity, a decision was taken and implemented that part of the military contingent that drove the racist army out of Angola would be deployed, on a permanent basis, south of the 15th parallel, occupying positions 200 km south of their previous positions.

Crisis for the Racist Army

The crisis that this defeat meant for the racist generals was best articulated by a correspondent of the magazine *West Africa,* who wrote:

> "Senior South African Defence Force (SADF) officers are showing increased alarm as the military initiative in Angola slips away from them. With 6 000 of their troops and armour pushed back 50 miles east of Cuito Cuanavale, and bogged down by the rains, a combined Cuban and Angolan army (FAPLA) column swept through Cunene province in heavy fighting as far as the Namibian border . . . with Angola's successful defence of Cuito Cuanavale, whose main component was air superiority, the balance of power has shifted in Luanda's favour. The current counter-offensive is now challenging the SADF as far south as the Namibian border."

Since South Africa's Mirage-3 fighter planes are no match for the Soviet-made Migs, the racist forces are no longer able to move into Angolan airspace with impunity. This condition has created a morale problem for an army that was brought up in the belief that South Africa is a regional super-power capable of defeating in battle all the neighbouring African states combined. At government level, both in South Africa and in the United States, it became apparent that the military option (which can no longer deliver the desired results) had to be combined with a diplomatic offensive. Observers of this situation found it interesting, if not surprising, that after the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Pretoria began redeploying some of its planes and logistical installations from the now vulnerable airfields of northern Namibia, to the main base at Grootfontein, more than 200 km south. In the first week of June (1988) an editorial in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* admitted that the Angolan-Cuban advance "wipes out ten years of SADF fighting to create a sanitised cordon between Swapo and the Namiban population."

OAU AT 25 YEARS — THE SILVER JUBILEE

Twenty five years ago, outstanding and visionary leaders of the African continent met in Addis Ababa on 25 May and forged unity which has come to be symbolised by the Organisation of African Unity. Some of those Africans giants, like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea Conakry and Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt, have become permanent though invisible guests at every OAU meeting, particularly one that commemorates its birthday. It cannot be otherwise in a continent where most, if not all, of the issues that impelled that unity still plague our continent. The struggle for the total liberation of Africa from colonialism is not yet complete. The question of African unity has also dogged the organisation consistently, with some of the issues that used to be taken for granted as creators of unity actually serving to divide the African countries even further. Yet, despite these problems, it can truly be said that when judged in historic terms, the OAU has legitimate grounds to pride itself on growing qualitatively. All independent African countries, whatever their conflicts, have found the OAU their most immediate source of assistance. It is in the OAU, more than in bilateral relations with some imperialist countries, that they are sure to negotiate for their interests as equals.

The two major challenges facing the organisation today are the solution of economic and financial problems, and the liberation of Namibia and South Africa.

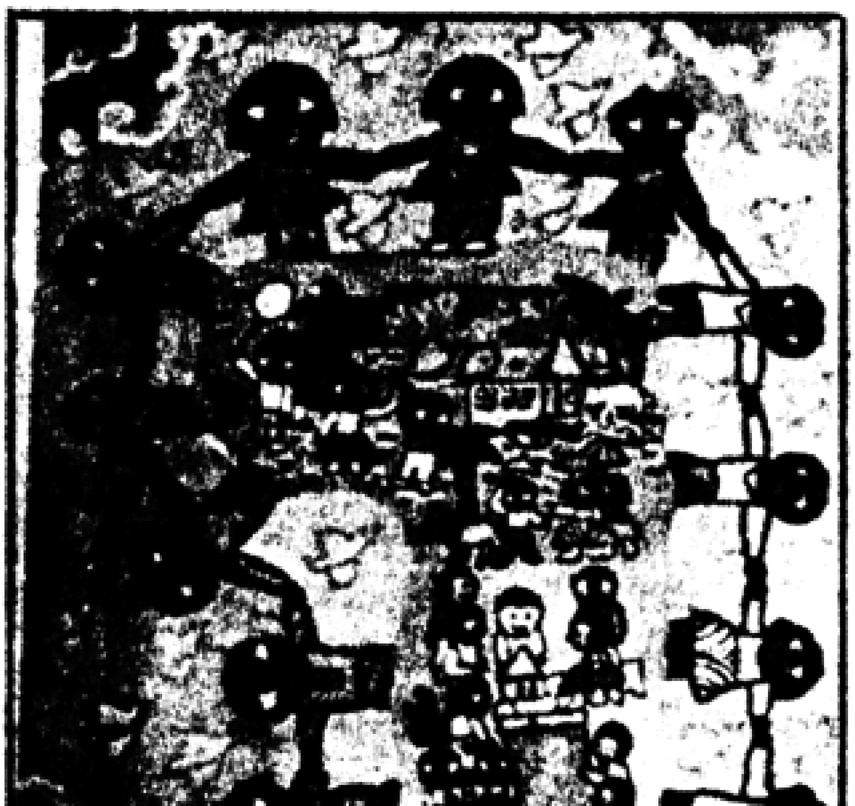
The 25th anniversary session that was held in Addis Ababa, the founding city, was dominated by efforts towards the solution of the problems caused by the unjust economic relations imposed by the former colonial powers and their allies. More than twenty African countries are classified as among the thirty poorest countries in the world, and Africa has the lowest gross national product per capita in the whole world. Since 1985 Africa has had an external debt of more than 200 billion US dollars. Of course, there is no doubt that the whole cause of Africa's economic weakness and dependence is the exploitation of her resources and unjust trading relations with the developed world. Such problems as drought, desertification and other natural calamities have been disastrous in the context of this economic reality.

The OAU has already put forward plans and definite strategies to confront Africa's economic problems. It has, among other things, demanded that the respective creditors should cancel debts of African countries because they are not payable, or, at least, give a 20 year period of grace to be followed by new long payment periods. There has developed within the OAU a new awareness regarding the solution of this question. This awareness is beginning to assume the same degree of unity as that manifested in the political and moral will among member states to deal with he problem of apartheid. However, even on the question of apartheid, Africa has yet to play a leading role within the world community.

At present, it is in Europe, America and Australia that real grassroots anti-apartheid movements have developed. However, there definitely does exist the possibility for developing a dynamic, mass based movement against apartheid among African countries. There is fertile soil for such a move.

More than in any other continent, in Africa the anti-apartheid struggle is of immediate political, moral and material concern to the broad working masses. Indeed, Africa's energies can best be concentrated if, and when, the Namibia and South African problem has been solved. With their natural wealth, a free Namibia and South Africa will make a tremendous contribution to the economic development of Africa as a whole.

African unity also has yet to manifest itself in the solution of the problems in Angola and Mozambique, the direct victims of racist aggression. It should be remembered that since the Second World War, no battle has been fought in Africa on the scale of what has been taking place in Angola and Mozambique. If Africa is once again to emerge victorious, it is important at this time that we strengthen joint and consistent action on the liberation of our continent, in order to rid us once and for all of racial supremacy which is an offence to universal morality, and to stop the bellicose and aggressive actions of the apartheid regime.



BUTHELEZI CALLED TO ANSWER AT THE BAR OF HISTORY

By Thando Zuma

A Review of: Gerald Mare' and Georgina Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power, Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa.* Ravan Press, Johannesburg and Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis. November 1987. £9.95 pbk. £25.00 hbk.

Mzala, *Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief with a Double Agenda.* Zed Books Ltd, London and New Jersey. February 1988. £7.95 pbk. £27.95 hbk.

The South African police and the SADF are probably amongst the most hated instruments of state repression in the world. Certainly, amongst the oppressed people in South Africa, the police and the apartheid army symbolise the brutal nature of the apartheid system that obtains in that country. It may therefore be puzzling to some that amongst black people there can be someone whose admiration of the South African police could be expressed so eloquently as by Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1987, when he said:

> "I have never hidden the fact that I have a high regard for General Johann Coetzee,...as the highest officer in the South African Police Force..." (Mare', 3).

This comes at a time when the South African police have been engaged in sadistic brutal killings, torture and maiming of many activists (including children) in our country. In 1987 for that matter the regime used the police (and the SADF) to mount a massive campaign of detentions under the cover of the states of emergency. How does one explain the fact that 'chief' Buthelezi could be such an admirer of Johann Coetzee the former 'counter-insurgency master' of the South African police?

Mzala asserts from the beginning of his book that "there is no easy explanation for the political behaviour of Chief Buthelezi" (4). Nevertheless these two books under review have set themselves the task of unveiling to the reader what really makes Mangosuthu Buthelezi tick.

Mzala needs no introduction to the readers of the literature of the liberation movement in South Africa. He is one of the prolific article writers in the pages of *Sechaba* and *The African Communist.* Most of his articles have provided stimulating thought on the conduct and tempo of the South African revolution. Mare' and Hamilton are both scholars at the University of Natal. Mare' has done some work on Inkatha before. [For example Mare' 1978: *Class Coonflict and Ideology among the petty-bourgeoisie in the 'homelands'; Inkatha — a study*, Wits and Mare' 1984, *Inkatha: What Content to Populism?* Natal University]

Some historical background

Gatsha Buthelezi has well publicised himself as the leader of six million Zulus in South Africa. The ruling class media have regarded it their duty to give Gatsha as much space in their columns as possible. The Western imperialist countries have found in Buthelezi someone they can embrace amongst black people in South Africa in their concentrated campaign to oppose the imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against the apartheid regime.

At the same time, numerous academics and political forces such as the PFP, who favour the so-called federal constitution for a future South Africa, have also found in Gatsha an example of the apparent complex character of the South African social formation that can only be resolved through a federal system of government. The KwaNatal indaba is part of this process to impose these federal type frameworks on South Africa in opposition to the unitary state demanded by the liberation movement.

Are the other bantustan 'leaders' not useful to imperialism and the South African state? Why does it look as if we are also over-concentrating on Buthelezi and ignoring the need to demolish the others as well? In short why Buthelezi?

Correctly Buthelezi does occupy a unique position amongst the bantustan 'leaders'. He is certainly the most controversial of all. He operates within the bantustan system but has pledged not to accept the full 'independence' of the KwaZulu bantustan, unlike Mphepu [Vendaland], the Matanzimas [formerly of the Transkei], Sebe [Ciskei], and Mangope of Bophutatswana. Paradoxically, he does now and again make public his criticism of the apartheid regime's schemes such as the tricameral parliamentary system. His pay *per annum* comes from Pretoria. Gatsha claims too that he is a fighter for the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa.

Here is how Buthelezi would explain himself to any critical audience:

> "I was born to occupy a leadership role in South Africa... I am a leader by hereditary right and follow in the footsteps of my father, grandfather and great-grandfather, who in turn followed in the footsteps of their forebears to the time of the founding father of KwaZulu, King Shaka... I and my forebears have always occupied influential positions as prime ministers... to successive Zulu Kings... Whatever whites did or could have done, I would have had to play one or another political role... King Cetshwayo... was my mother's grandfather... My great-grandfather was Prime Minister to King Cetshwayo... I provide this detail about my own background because it is a detail known to black South Africa and accepted by them as establishing my *bona fides.*"

Thus he continues,

> "I am a hereditary chief in a long line of succession of those who have filled the position of Prime Minister to Zulu kings. It is in response to this demand of my ancestry that I took up my political role in KwaZulu The role was pre-ordained for me long before apartheid emerged in this country. I was a chief in my own right before the Nationalist Party ever dreamt of the current homeland policy objective." (Mzala, 103).

Is Gatsha a chief? [in the hereditary/royal sense as opposed to being an apartheid chief who was imposed by the Tribal Authorities]. I quote Mzala *in extenso:*

> "Chief Mathole, Mceleli's father, had nine wives by whom he had a number of children. When he was an old man, and considered within the tribe as one no longer able to father a child, King Solomon ka Dinizulu [the father of King Cyprian] who had a sister who had grown up without anybody proposing marriage to her [she was called Magogo Constance Zulu], sent a message to Chief Mathole, couched in diplomatic Zulu idiom, suggesting that he should take Magogo in marriage. This meant that Magogo was to be Mathole's tenth wife... Chief Mathole complied and informed the tribe that it had to pay lobola for the princess. For two years after the marriage, Princess Magogo failed to become pregnant.
>
> "Amidst rumours about Chief Mathole's infertility, princess Magogo left the Buthelezi homestead and went to KwaDlamahlala, the royal palace of King Solomon, to complain that he had given her over to a man no longer able to father children. The matter was talked over between them, and Princess Magogo, being a

> woman of strong character and will, went back to Mahlabathini to live among the Buthelezis. Eventually she did become pregnant and gave birth to a son on 27 August 1928." (69)

Was this the chief's son? "When Chief Mathole was told the news, he was 'so astonished' that he felt the whole story 'must be a lie of the Usuthu... and gave the child the first name of 'Mangosuthu', literally meaning 'a lie of Usuthu'." (69).

Long-running Dispute

Mzala goes on to explain that there is a long-running dispute among the Buthelezis about the correct person to be their chief by hereditary right. The first wife of Chief Mathole had a son whose name is Mceleli [who incidentally is alive and well but forced to live outside his home because of the conflict with Gatsha over the chieftainship]. According to Zulu/Nguni tradition, the son of the first wife of a chief or king inherits the throne. Thus Mceleli not Gatsha should have been the chief of the Buthelezis. Gatsha only became chief because he was supported by the then Minister of Native Affairs in 1953. The case between Gatsha and Mceleli was not even resolved by the Supreme Court but by the combination of the SAP (who arrested Mceleli and exiled him to Sibasa in the northern Transvaal) and the Department of Native Affairs. The Buthelezis thus had a chief forced on them by the apartheid regime.

So much for "I am leader by hereditary right".

What about the traditional premiership of the Zulu people? Mzala argues that nowhere in Zulu history is there mentioned anything like "traditional prime minister". In fact the only Buthelezi to have played the role of chief councillor to a Zulu king was Chief Mnyamana during the time of King Cetshwayo [1872-1884] (105). Accordingly,

> "what emerges clearly from early Zulu history is that there is no established... tradition that obliges kings to appoint chiefs from particular tribes for the so-called role of premier. The premiership is not a hereditary title. Chief Buthelezi's claim is therefore not substantiated by history. Chief Buthelezi has used the circumstance that placed his own great-grandfather in this position, and has then made a 'tradition' of it" (105).

In fact as Mzala has shown in his book, no other Buthelezi after Mnyamana played that role until Gatsha arrived on the scene.

Probably the strongest part of Mzala's book is this section dealing with the position of Mangosuthu in Zulu history and society. Mzala has succeeded in my opinion in placing Mangosuthu in a wider context which enables people to understand this 'complex' character in some perspective. The fact is that Mangosuthu Buthelezi is suffering from a very strong insecurity complex [because he is not a chief by birth, he may not even be a prince, he is not any traditional premier at all, yet he makes wild claims to the contrary]. This insecurity complex forces him into a desperate search for political alliances with the apartheid regime which seek to legitimise an otherwise illegitimate role both as chief and as 'leader' of the Zulu people by 'tradition'.

Chief Buthelezi is only secure politically in the ambit of the bantustan system which is actually responsible for making him a chief.

Gatsha enters the Bantustan system

Both books under review are agreed that the roots of Mangosuthu's prominence on the South African political scene can be traced to the development of the bantustan system. In the chapter dealing with *The Institutions of Apartheid,* Mare' and Hamilton have shown that the rise of Chief Buthelezi is firmly embedded in the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 (33). How did this come about?

There was conflict with Mceleli for the chieftainship of the Buthelezis, as already indicated above. It was clear to the apartheid regime that Gatsha was desperate to become chief and they were able to manipulate this desire on the part of Gatsha to their benefit. Gatsha was at Fort Hare from 1948. He registered for a BA in Bantu Administration. In 1950 the ANC Youth League organised a partially successful boycott of the visit to Fort Hare by the Governor General of the Union of South Africa, Brand van Zyl. The university administration promptly took action against students they thought were behind the boycott. Amongst those expelled was Gatsha Buthelezi (Mare' 32).

Although Mare' and Hamilton assert that Mangosuthu was a member of the ANC Youth League from 1948 to 1950, Mzala suggests that he actually never was one. Mzala says that he interviewed ANC activists who were in Natal during that period. Amongst others he cites MB Yengwa, Johnny Makhatini and Archie Gumede (66). They all agree that without any prejudice, Chief Buthelezi was never an ANC member, though he did associate with prominent activists of the time like MB Yengwa, Jordan Ngubane and Zami Conco.

After completing his studies through the University of Natal but graduating at Fort Hare, Gatsha is reported by his biographer, Temkin, to have said that as a possible "future chief, he had to play his politics in as low key as possible" (Mare', 33); indeed, as low key as to promise Senator Edgar Brookes "that he would steer clear of politics for the time being" (33). Stand clear of liberation politics he did, but not of the bantustan system.

He was called for an interview by the secretary of the Bantu Administration Department, Dr W.W.M. Eiselen, who put it very clearly to Gatsha that if he wanted to become chief of the Buthelezis, he had to "wipe out" the Fort Hare history (33). For two years, Gatsha worked for the Department of Native Affairs. In 1953, he was made acting chief of the Buthelezis. Mangosuthu pledged to *"co-operate with the government and conform to the law"* (Mzala, 67).

After this, the stage was set for 'Chief' Buthelezi's full incorporation into the whole system of Tribal Authorities and Bantustans. Mzala has laid bare the whole process in the chapters under the headings of *Bantu Authorities come to Zululand* and *Buthelezi and the KwaZulu Bantustan.* The evidence collected is damning to Buthelezi. Gatsha is now chief minister and minister of police in the KwaZulu bantustan. The KwaZulu police are part of the SAP whose former commissioner Johann Coetzee was so admired by Gatsha.

Inkatha's violence against black people

In these two books, the authors have put together a convincing story of the revival of Inkatha in 1975 and its subsequent reign of terror against black people in the form of vigilante action. What is already known about Inkatha relating to its coerced membership and misuse of tradition is well discussed in the two books. Mare' and Hamilton, though, attempt sometimes unconvincingly to explain Inkatha as a project of some ill-defined petty-bourgeoisie for capital accumulation (46). But on the whole they are agreed that whoever is behind Inkatha, one thing has emerged very clearly, that Inkatha is an instrument for implementing the machinations of the apartheid regime.

Both books have collected evidence which makes it difficult for anybody to deny Inkatha's role in the vigilante campaigns against the people who actively oppose apartheid. Mzala has for instance spent page after page graphically documenting Inkatha vigilante atrocities against activists in his chapter on *Inkatha: the Hidden Hand of State Terror.* This evidence by Mzala clearly illustrates that despite repeated statements by Mangosuthu saying that "Inkatha is committed to non-violence", the contrary is true, Inkatha is a violent organisation. Mzala is correct when he says that if anybody thought Inkatha was peaceful, they should ask the opinion of students at Ngoye (13).

Inkatha has also tried to divide the working class by the formation of the sweetheart union UWUSA whose executive is made up of businessmen. "At its launch, UWUSA elected its office bearers. Its president, PS Ndlovu... personnel manager with the giant Tongaat-Hulett group... general secretary was Simon Conco, director of Khulani Holdings, and as treasurer Peter Davidson, an hotelier, a director of Khulani Insurance Brokers." (Mzala, 179). UWUSA is being used as a counter to the militant unionism of COSATU. It is being used to put a wrong picture that the working class in South Africa is against sanctions.

But how do the authors explain to us the fact that huge crowds of people attended the launch of UWUSA on May Day at King's Park Stadium in 1986? Were all those people coerced into Inkatha/UWUSA membership? The photographs in Mare' and Hamilton's book also show evidence of a huge crowd at the UWUSA launch. Mzala has a tentative answer to this. He argues that "hundreds of buses and trucks were hired to collect people from all over the country, particularly from the rural areas, using the services of chiefs who had prepared for the event well in advance. Some people came from as far as Johannesburg and Pretoria" (179).

Furthermore, people were not told the whole truth about what they were going to do at King's Park; indeed many had been told of a feast where cows would be slaughtered. And "many rural people are vulnerable to pressure and it is reasonable to feel there may have been some (pressure) applied to 'persuade' people to travel vast distances to attend a political rally. On the other hand a free trip to the 'big city' plus the prospect of a 'meat feast' could act as a desirable incentive to many rural peasants" (Mzala, 180).

A Valuable Asset

Certainly these two books will go a long way towards explaining some of the unknown facts behind Chief Buthelezi and his Inkatha movement and its relation to the apartheid system vis-a-vis the liberation movement of which Buthelezi is clearly not a part. Mzala's book will surely prove invaluable to many activists at home and in the solidarity movement, not only because of its wealth of information but also because of its easy-to-read, humorous and captivating style. His knowledge of Zulu history, accumulated not only from books but also from Zulu oral history, and his profound understanding of the Zulu language make Mzala one of the most reliable authorities on the subject.

Without doubt, Mare' and Hamilton have also done a valuable service to activists by writing their book. Their meticulous search for all sorts of documentation put together in the book exposes Chief Buthelezi for what he is. My main problem with Mare' and Hamilton is their as yet undeveloped theories of populism and class analysis which come out now and again in their book. They confuse 'populism' with 'popular' all the time and always impose 'class' categories on their analysis instead of letting class issues emerge naturally. They tend, too, to be too 'academic' at times, unnecessarily giving long lists of sources in the text.

One thing also emerges in these two books which South African researchers must clearly begin to confront. A lot of the recent research and publications on a whole range of topics relating to an alternative interpretation of South African history and society in general has been done by the so-called "new left intelligentsia". Most of these researchers are based at the white liberal universities in South Africa. Most of them (not all) have distorted our people's history and resistance politics.

Perhaps the time is now ripe for the revolutionary intelligentsia to take an even greater interest in writing. Mzala is one of a new generation of South African writers whose work will enrich the content of the existing forms of research and publications.

Finally, it emerges clearly from the above brief review of the two books that Chief Buthelezi is not a freedom fighter. He has taken sides with the apartheid regime against the people. He is very useful to the imperialist countries in particular in presenting our struggle as a tribal complexity that can only be resolved through the bantustanisation of South Africa. He cannot be compared in any way to the traditional leaders of the Zulu people like Shaka or King Cetshwayo. A complete picture of this complex but obvious sell-out can be fully grasped by reading these two books, in particular the one by Mzala.

* * *

As the State arose out of the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it, at the same time, arose in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the State of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by virtue thereof becomes also the dominant class politically, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.

Engels: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,* 1884.

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TO WHOM DOES SOUTH AFRICA BELONG?

A review of **South Africa Belongs To Us — A History of the ANC,** by Francis Meli, published by Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1988, 201 pp.

Critical observers of the South African liberation movement have often remarked, perhaps with some justification, that South African revolutionaries lack an intellectual culture. When comparison is made with the Vietnamese, it is noted that most of their leaders — Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Trióng Chinh, Vo Nguyen Giap, etc. — wrote about their revolutionary experience, whereas South Africans, despite the richness and originality of their contribution to revolutionary history, have generally neglected this exercise. The price that has had to be paid for this neglect is the mushrooming of a number of so-called experts on the ANC outside of the ANC itself, most of whom are marketing theories that show very little understanding of the ANC and its history.

In this context it is an important historical development that a history of the ANC has been written by an ANC member: Francis Meli, the Editor of *Sechaba* and member of the National Executive of the ANC. As he himself says in the Preface: "This is a different book".

Meli has given flesh to skeletal sketches that have been written by most hitherto existing historians on the ANC. His attention to detail, particularly when introducing personalities, gives life to the pages of this book and this compels the reader to imagine himself or herself actually living through each historical period as well as to identify with the characters.

Long before individual leaders like Dr Seme called for the formation of the ANC, regional initiatives in all four provinces of South Africa were underway. Meli makes the point in this regard that the history of society is not merely a biography of great men but an activity of the masses. This view is also taken by Brian Willan, the biographer of Sol Plaatje, who wrote:

> "Towards the end of 1908, a number of meetings were convened in different parts of the country and they invariably passed resolutions against the colour-bar clauses in the draft South Africa Act, protesting against the failure of the white policy-makers to extend the Cape franchise to the northern colonies. This movement of protest culminated in a South African Native Congress."

It was at this convention that a call was made for the establishment of a permanent organisation to represent the aspirations of the African people and to serve as a medium for their unity. Thenceforth the founding fathers of our movement sent delegation after delegation to England to protest against the colonial character of the South African state. Each time the English government took sides with the racist rulers of the country and against the wishes of the African people.

Reformist or Revolutionary?

Most students of history have concluded that at this time the ANC was reformist in character. Meli disagrees.

> "It would be wrong to deduce from this that the ANC at this time was simply reformist and end there ... deputations and appeals were part of traditional African political custom ... In 1915 the enemy was different from our enemy today ... The conflicts between British and Boer were sharper than they are today and this gave rise to a hope that Britain might concede to the pleas of the Africans ..." (pp.44-45)

Some might disagree with the view that at the very beginning of the 20th century "deputations and appeals were part of traditional African political custom" given the two centuries of uninterrupted military resistance against the colonisers. Meli's point, however, is one of partisanship. Throughout the book his partisanship to the ANC is unquestionable. Too often armchair critics of the ANC pick up elements in its early history to show that it is not, and never was, a revolutionary organisation. In so doing they close their eyes to the profoundly revolutionary nature of its very foundation as the first liberation movment on the African continent. Meli puts the record straight by placing the emphasis where it belongs. He shows the significance of the campaigns by the new African intellectuals to promote feelings of brotherhood and a spirit of unity among various African ethnic groups. He traces Seme's and Plaatje's efforts to rally the chiefs and other leaders for an urgent meeting to consolidate this unity, a meeting which was not to be "unnecessarily postponed by reason of personal differences and selfishness".

In these days of *glasnost* and *perestroika,* however, partisanship should also be tempered with realism. There must be no blank pages in history. Everything should be told, and told boldly as well as, if needs be, ruthlessly. The ANC of those days, it should not be forgotten, had a different social composition from that of today: ministers of religion, lawyers and medical doctors were the main fabric of its leadership. It was not a mass movement but a political fraternity that only met annually and still recognised the "traditional" leadership role of chiefs in the African community. Even its most "radical" and outstanding leaders, such as Sol Plaatje, while rejecting what they called "Dutch inhumanity", still had faith in what they called "British justice". S.E.K. Mqhayi, a noted Xhosa poet, was summarising these sentiments of those days when he recited verses that referred to the Africans as "loyal British subjects". And this was in spite of the fact that the British were the principal colonisers. Writing of the ANC during the First World War years, Meli demonstrates his awareness of this state of affairs when he says:

> "In the years 1914-16, the ANC had largely refrained from any criticism of the South African government as a demonstration of their loyalty to the king and Empire in the war against Germany." (p.48)

The ANC has always moved with the times; it has had its ups and downs; its leaders have come and gone, some even purged; it has always reflected the dynamism that characterises every true people's movement. Young members of the ANC should seize every opportunity to acquaint themselves with this history, the changes that the ANC has gone through, in order to assess correctly possible ways of further developing the organisation in consonance with the times.

Mbeki's Letter

In 1941 Govan Mbeki wrote a letter to Dr Xuma complaining that "the Transkei is, to be frank, politically in midnight slumber". In 1942 Rev. Calata reported to the National Executive Committee that in passing through Pietermaritzburg he addressed a meeting which was presided over by J.T. Gumede, former president of the ANC, and, "I am afraid that Natal requires a special attention. Congress is dying in that province . . ." Around 1943 Molema estimated that ANC membership was 253! Yet from those humble beginnings the ANC has grown to command the allegiance of millions of South Africans, who rightfully consider it their vanguard in the struggle for national liberation. Part of this achievement was initiated by the youth — Tambo, Mda, Mandela, Sisulu, Lembede, Nkomo, etc.

Referring to the ANC Youth League, Meli lays to rest many misconceptions about Anton Lembede, who is often remembered as an uncompromising Africanist who shared no agenda with either Indian or Coloured. Meli writes:

> "Lembede was part of the Joint Committee of Africans and Indians, . . . he was a member of a subcommittee which appealed to the Coloureds to join them as well. . ."

The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) seems not to have understood this fact when it advanced Lembede's name as justification for their exclusivist policy. Or, perhaps, it should be said they are the upholders of Lembede's ideas when he was still young and immature.

In his Preface Meli says that the story of the PAC belongs to the history of the ANC only in the context of demonstrating the contradictions inherent in African nationalism. He concludes:

> "I could not deal with this phenomenon at length, as it would only help to disrupt the flow of the narrative and detract from the main issue without contributing anything. In practical politics the ANC is becoming tired of carrying the PAC on its back, more so because it is said dead wood is very heavy."

In my view it would have been better if Meli had given us more information about who the PAC really is and whom it serves in South Africa. It should be remembered that the PAC is still regarded by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN) as a liberation movement. Devoting a few pages to a discussion of how the PAC came about as well as analysing its ideological shortcomings in the attempt to solve the South African question may help enlighten many people, including some members of the PAC itself who might have joined it innocently.

A serious analysis of the Pan Africanist tendency in South African history might help explain such phenomena as the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) or NACTU. Walter Sisulu wrote in an article in 1959:

> ". . . there are men and women among them (the PAC) who genuinely believe that the salvation of our people lies in the fanatical African racialism and denunciation of everything that is not African. As such a policy is not without its potential mass appeal, it would be unrealistic to pretend that a policy of extreme nationalism must, in the nature of things, always be unpopular . . . In a country like South Africa, where the Whites dominate everything, and where ruthless laws are ruthlessly administered and enforced, the natural tendency is one of growing

> hostility towards Europeans. In fact most Africans come into political activity because of their indignation against the Whites, and it is only through their education in Congress and their experience of the genuine comradeship in the struggle of such organisations as the Congress of Democrats, that they rise to the broad, non-racial humanism of our Congress movement." (*Africa South,* July-September, 1959, p.34)

Sisulu warned that it would be foolish to imagine that a wave of black chauvinism, provoked by the savagery of the National Party (and perhaps secretly encouraged and financed by it too) may not some day sweep through our country. AZAPO, NACTU and other such tendencies will persist as long as we have not sufficiently explained our advanced positions to the masses of our people, and as long as there is no practical demonstration, on the ground, of the political activity of white revolutionaries, no matter how small, as proof that not all blacks are good and not all whites are bad.

Political Issues

Meli does not only engage in history-narration but also discusses political issues thematically, developing his subject with each phase of struggle and helping us understand why certain decisions were taken by the ANC at particular times. Such is his treatment of the formation of Umkhonto We Sizwe as well as the 1969 Morogoro Conference, which he calls "a turning point". Even before this period he lets us into little known historical terrain: the 1962 Lobatse Conference. Although little more than a mere mention is made of this event (which was attended by the internal and external leadership of the ANC), its very mention in the book is an indication that the author is attempting to cover all phases of development.

Almost all past historians treat the history of the liberation movement in South Africa in an unbalanced way, particularly when they ignore the fact that the Communist Party has been in alliance with the ANC from the first decade of its foundations. Meli, however, succeeds where others have failed, for throughout his discussion he brings forward the relationship between nationalism and socialism like Siamese twins.

The only period in the history of the ANC that is not extensively researched and documented is after its banning in South Africa. How did the ANC survive the arrests that followed? How has life been like in exile? How did it manage to rekindle the flame of organisation that is today a conflagration leading to the declaration of a permanent state of emergency? How has the ANC developed from the old organisation of 1912? How does the ANC leadership see the past and some of the decisions that were taken during this period taking advantage of hindsight? These are the questions that a contemporary historian of the ANC should cover, but which can only be covered if participants in that struggle are brought into the research by way of interviews. This book leaves many of these questions unanswered. Only an ANC historian has the possibility of searching for answers to them because of the privilege of looking at things from within. Meli may need to give us this benefit in a second edition or a second volume of the book.

SISA MAJOLA

MARX & ENGELS The Communist Manifesto
BOOK
REVIEWS
V I Lenin
Karl Marx

LEARNING THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS

The Search for the Virus, by Steve Connor and Sharon Kingsman, (Penguin Books 1988, £3.50)
Aids, Africa and Racism, by Richard Chirimuuta and Rosalyn Chirimuuta. (R Chirimuuta, Bretby House DE15 0PT 1987, £6.00)

The first cases of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) were identified in 1981 in the homosexual population of California in the United States. Since these early reports the disease has been found world-wide. An epidemic of a new disease in itself is remarkable but there are several other features of this scourge which are relevant to our understanding of its cause and determining effective ways of containing its spread.

Perhaps the most important feature of AIDS is that it is a fatal disease for which at this point there is no treatment or vaccine.

The disease is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which invades and destroys the cells of the body that are responsible for maintaining our immune defence mechanisms. The patient with AIDS is therefore particularly susceptible to infection with organisms which are common in our environment but in the immuno-competent person usually do not cause any illness. These patients are also prone to certain forms of cancer.

The diagnosis of the disease is made on its clinical features and the detection of antibodies to the virus in the blood. Unfortunately, the presence of antibodies, which in other diseases implies elimination of the virus causing the corresponding disease, indicates infection with HIV. Another peculiarity of the HIV infection is that there are several stages in the development of the disease of AIDS with usually a long incubation period before the disease develops. Indeed, the majority of individuals infected with HIV do not have any clinical features although it is now believed that more than 70% will develop AIDS. The delay can be as long as 7-8 years.

The second feature of AIDS and HIV infection is its mode of spread. It is predominantly a sexually transmitted disease, although it can also be passed on through infected blood transfusions, contaminated needles used for intravenous injections and from an infected mother to her unborn baby. Like all sexually-transmitted diseases, it affects young people in the prime of their lives.

A third feature is that AIDS is a particularly debilitating disease which can render the patient weak and demoralised, requiring constant physical care and mental support.

The fourth feature of importance is the regional endemic areas where the HIV is widespread. The highest frequencies have been found in certain parts of the US, particularly New York in intravenous drug users, and California where it is afflicting predominantly the male homosexual population, Brazil in South America and Central Africa where the spread is predominantly through hetrosexual contact.

Understand the Facts

A major consequence of the absence of a cure for AIDS is that its containment can occur only through education of the general population, providing a proper understanding of the dangers of the disease, how it is spread and indeed how not to spread it. It is important to realise that HIV infection cannot be passed on by ordinary social contact. The virus multiplies in the white cells of the blood and is known to be secreted into the vaginal secretions and semen. It cannot therefore be transmitted through being in the same room with or close to an infected person, handshaking, social kissing, or even using the same utensils.

Two books have recently been published which address different aspects of AIDS.

The Search for the Virus gives a rivetting account of the acquiring of information on the cause and diagnosis of AIDS, its epidemiology and attempts at treating it with drugs and developing a vaccine against it. AIDS was first described in the United States in 1981 although retrospective diagnoses suggest that there were cases in several parts of the world as early as 1977. The spread of the disease was first noticed in the homosexual (gay) community in California and in intravenous drug users. Subsequently it was found in recipients of infected blood transfusions, heterosexual partners of infected partners and the offspring of infected mothers. The first notification of the disease in Africa occurred about 1983 and it was noted immediately that the spread there was predominantly through hetrosexual contact.

The discovery of HIV as a cause of AIDS highlighted the competition between scientists and laboratories to be first in the identification of the cause. There is little doubt that the conflict between the prime researchers, Montaignor at the Pasteur Institute in France and Gallo at the National Institute of Health in the USA, impeded the isolation of the virus responsible for AIDS. The financial implications for the discoverer were enormous; the investigator given the credit would be in a strong position to receive further research funding which throughout the world is now more difficult to obtain. Moreover, in this case a major conflict arose over the patent rights for the diagnostic test based on the structure of the virus which would be worth millions of dollars. Before a compromise was reached (in 1986) between the warring factions, scientists and governments were squabbling over patent rights while people were dying of AIDS.

The US government responded very slowly to the threat of the spread of AIDS in the country. The gay community had themselves established that the way to prevent the spread of AIDS was to inform their community of the dangers of the disease, how it spreads and how to prevent the spread. The US government failed to accept the reality of the situation and Reagan's response in 1986 was to call for more screening as a solution. This procedure of screening has been adopted by several countries for students from Africa only. Not only is there implied racism in this policy, but the WHO maintains that mass testing of foreign travellers can lead to massive misallocations of resources which could be more effectively directed to educating the population concerning HIV or screening blood for transfusion. There are more effective, less intrusive, and less costly measures for preventing HIV transmission than the use of mandatory universal screening.

Racism

In the book *AIDS, Africa and Racism* the authors quite clearly show how racism has affected the response to AIDS in Africa of scientists and the media in many countries in Europe and North America. The presence of AIDS in Central Africa provided a scapegoat and the scientific and lay community were only too pleased to lay the blame for AIDS at the feet of Africa. The authors deserve full credit for exposing the inherent racism which prejudiced many studies by Westerners in Africa. However, they devote much of their space to attack the arguments that have suggested that AIDS originated in Africa. This in my view is counterproductive. No one really knows where the virus originated. What is important is to expose the racism behind the attempts to focus on Africa and not to allow it to distract attention from the urgent need to pursue policies of containment and prevention.

The real potential tragedy of the AIDS epidemic in Africa and indeed throughout the world has not yet been perceived. The limited resources must be increased but also used to best advantage, ie, screening blood for transfusion, eradicating the repeated use of needles and, most important, educating the community on the dangers of AIDS and how to prevent its spread.

The message is simple — practise safe sex by reducing the number of sexual partners and using a condom. To get the message across is the problem that has to be resolved by all responsible countries and communities, not least in Africa.

D.R.

BUILDING A SINGLE SOUTH AFRICAN NATION

The South African Working Class And The National Democratic Revolution, by Joe Slovo, published by the South African Communist Party, 1988, pp.38.

The development of the people's organisational strength in the South African revolution has been accompanied by an equal development of the debate about the actual line of march to total liberation. The Freedom Charter has taken a central place in this debate. Two approaches have emerged: one regards the establishment of a socialist republic as the immediate aim of struggle, while the other considers this phase as aiming at the immediate national liberation of the African people in particular, and the black people in general, and the establishment of one united state of people's power in which the working class will be the dominant force and which will move uninterruptedly towards socialism.

Few politically conscious people among the oppressed doubt that the ultimate result of the present revolution will be the end of the exploitation of man by man. The problem in the debate only arises when the route to that desired society is brought up. The South African media have labelled these tendencies "workerist" and "populist". Slovo's intervention in this discussion is timely and important. He starts off by posing the following questions:

— Does the immediate emphasis on the national democratic revolution imply that the working class should abandon class struggle in favour of national struggle?

— Are socialist objectives being shelved in favour of a struggle for so-called bourgeois democracy?

— Which class must play the vanguard role in our democratic revolution?

— How can the independent class role of the working class be safeguarded in a period demanding inter-class alliances?

Slovo argues that by asking only whether our struggle is a *national* struggle or a *class* struggle, one will inevitably get a wrong answer. The question should be: what is the relationship between these two categories?

> "A failure to understand the class content of the national struggle and the national content of the class struggle in existing conditions can hold back the advance of both the democratic and socialist transformation which we seek." (pp.5-6)

He then goes further to demonstrate, by citing practical political grievances of all the oppressed black people in South Africa, that the concept of *national liberation* is not "a mystification to divert us from class approaches", but a concrete demand based on the existence of national domination. Apartheid oppression denies the aspirations of the African people to single nationhood and liberation. There is no issue more immediate and relevant than the experience of national oppression. It is this reality, then, that makes it the struggle of the whole oppressed people in their various class formations.

Relying for his support on Lenin's famous arguments in the *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,* Slovo shows that even the black petty-bourgeois stratum stands to gain from this national democratic revolution, whose aims are enshrined in the Freedom Charter, which is not a socialist programme. But because Slovo's approach is to avoid creating a mechanical dichotomy between *national* and *class* struggle, and also because the main target of his pamphlet is those who criticise the Party for tailing behind the ANC and its nationalist programme, he adds that the working class develops its class struggle against the bourgeoisie precisely within the context of the struggle for national liberation.

> "We cannot confine the meaning of class struggle to those rare moments when the immediate winning of socialist power is on the agenda. When workers engage in the national struggle to destroy race domination they are surely, at the same time, engaging in class struggle". (p.7)

And since the working class does not abandon its grievances against the capitalist system during the course of waging a struggle for national liberation, it enters into alliance with other classes and strata of the oppressed population, mindful of its independent identity as well as its ultimate class mission. It is this condition that gives meaning to the independent existence of the Communist Party and the logic of its alliance with the ANC. Slovo also touches on the concept of "stages" of the revolution. He advises against treating stages as "water-tight compartments".

> "We do indeed see the current stage of struggle — the national democratic phase — as the most direct route of advance, in our particular conditions, to a second stage, socialist development . . . There is, however, both a distinction and a continuity between the national democratic revolution and socialist revolution; they can neither be completely telescoped nor completely compartmentalised." (p.15)

The National Question

In his last chapter on "The Building of the Nation" Slovo discusses the national question in South Africa. Here he correctly puts the emphasis on the process of building single nationhood, but then denies that there exist in South Africa at present two nations, the oppressor and oppressed nations. On page 28 he asks the question: "Does the colonial status of the dominated blacks lead us to the conclusion that there are already two nations in our country — the oppressed and the oppressor?" He gives an answer on page 35: "Colonialism of a special type does not imply a two-nations thesis." And on page 36 he adds: "The colonialism of a special type thesis neither ignores class divisions within the dominant and dominated communities, nor does it postulate the existence of two full-formed 'nations' — white and black."

Are there or are there not two nations in South Africa? The 1962 Communist Party Programme stated:

> "The conceding of independence to South Africa by Britain, in 1910, was not a victory over the forces of colonialism and imperialism . . . A new type of colonialism was developed, in which the oppressing white nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them."

Can it be denied that when the oppressed people of South Africa formed the ANC in 1912 they were essentially expressing their desire for independent statehood in South Africa as a newly formed nation?

The 1962 Party Programme's reasoning was in fact in line with Lenin's argument on the national question that an abstract presentation of the national question is of no use at all since in every colonial situation a distinction has to be made between the oppressor and oppressed nations, a distinction which forms the essence of colonialism or imperialism. It is because of the concrete existence of this distinction that black nationalism and white nationalism in South Africa are not a false consciousness but a reflection of reality. Furthermore, the problem presented by the apartheid system is not just the division and separation of peoples (particularly the creation of ethnic enclaves) but mainly the *oppression* of the blacks. Emphasis on the creation of unity in the solution of this question only becomes meaningful if the principal grievance — oppression of the oppressed nation — is redressed. And the onus of this redress is on the oppressed people themselves in the exercise of their right to *self-determination.*

Not all whites support this oppression of the blacks, yet all whites who live in South Africa (even the white working class) benefit from the oppression of the blacks. This makes whites a ruling nation even though it is principally the white bourgeoisie who use this condition of national inequality to reap super profits. The revolutionary movement, of course, seeks to change this condition, and it is already in the process of forging that single South African nation, as represented in the liberation movement. The last chapter in Slovo's pamphlet explains the importance of this process. What it does not explain is that the process of building a single nation is in fact a solution to the present problem presented by the existence of *two nations* who live in conditions of inequality, and the oppression of one by the other.

Sisa Majola

THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION AT THE CROSSROADS

Race, Class and the Apartheid State, by Harold Wolpe (James Currey — OAU — Unesco Press, 1988)

Academic studies on South Africa leapt forward in the early 1970's in quantity, diversity and sophistication. It was a significant development and, because much of the work was guided by Marxism, it challenged the prevailing liberal dominance in the social sciences at the English language, largely white campuses of South Africa. Among the more seminal articles emerging at the time were those of Harold Wolpe.

This general leap forward also had limitations, which were to become more apparent with the resurgence of struggle in South Africa. These limitations were, inevitably, related to the conditions out of which this work was emerging. It was academic, the researchers in the early days were overwhelmingly white, much of the early work was based on a few British campuses and, being under the direct influence of intellectual trends in Western Europe, carried within it a certain Eurocentrism.

These inherent limitations were enhanced by the political situation inside South Africa; it was a time in which the national liberation movement was only just struggling back into existence from the low ebb of the late 1960's. By the early 1980's, in changed conditions, when progressive academics and activists rooted in mass sttruggle began to confront each other, there were some inevitable dislocations, the result, no doubt, of uneven development on both sides.

Wolpe, a long-serving ANC member, has been one of the few academically based theorists who has, all along, consistently endeavoured to write for and within the broader discipline of the national liberation movement. Now that many more progressive academics are aligning themselves creatively with the national liberation movement, Wolpe's example is an important one.

In this, Wolpe's most recent contribution, he sets himself two principal objectives. The first is to provide an overall theoretical critique of the literature (both academic and more directly political). In particular he is concerned with the ways in which the relationship between race, class and the political system in South Africa is theorised. The second objective is to move from this critique to a periodisation of the apartheid political system, noting significant changes and emerging contradictions.

In pursuing the first objective Wolpe underlines a number of major conceptual obstacles that cut across different theoretical approaches. They include:

(1) a tendency to overemphasise historical continuity — for instance, overemphasising the continuity of racial oppression in South Africa from the 19th to the 20th century, from the pre-apartheid to the post-apartheid period, and within the apartheid period itself. By uncritically assuming a continuity, the tensions, counter-tendencies and contradictions are obscured and an adequate analysis of the changing terrain on which our struggle is being waged gets blocked.

(2) race or class reductionism, in which either race or class is collapsed into a mere echo of the other (as in black consciousness theory, or, in the reverse direction, workerism).

(3) a tendency to deal with our struggle descriptively, as a simple series of events, strategies, defeats and victories. This descriptive tendency, Wolpe argues, undercuts rigorous analysis of the objective, structural limitations on both the ruling bloc and the national liberation movement.

Some Quibbles

This theoretical ground-clearing is extremely useful. The reader will recognise in much of the current political debate variants of these conceptual blockages that Wolpe highlights. I do have some quibbles, however. For instance, in dealing with the theory of colonialism of a special type Wolpe notes, correctly, that it avoids class and race reductionism. But, he adds, "because it posits an inevitable and functional relationship between racial domination and capitalism in South Africa it is unable to exploit to the full the conception of the interlinkages between race and class." (p.2) Against this "inevitable and functional relationship" Wolpe argues for a real, but historically contingent relationship fraught with contradictions and counter-tendencies.

I do not disagree with the way that Wolpe formulates the relationship between race and class. Unfortunately he is not careful enough here, and elsewhere, to distinguish between particular, partially flawed, formulations of the colonialism of a special type approach and the general theory itself. The reader could be left with the mistaken (I think) impression that Wolpe regards this functionalism, of which he is correctly critical, to be itself a functional and not contingent component of the general internal colonial approach to South Africa.

In the second part of the book Wolpe provides a useful periodisation of the apartheid years. This section would be more complete if the economic developments of the period were dealt with more substantially. As it is, the periodisation is explicitly based on political changes. He concludes with an analysis of the present conjuncture, characterising it as a situation of unstable equilibrium:

> "The South African revolutionary struggle stands at the crossroads: the ability of the mass democratic organisations to withstand the full repressive onslaught of the state is being put to the test, but the overthrow of the regime and the apartheid system will depend upon escalation of the armed struggle and its combination with the insurrectionary movement." (p.110)

Being little more than one hundred pages the book is relatively short, but some of the conceptual terminology will unfortunately make it less accessible to general readers than one would have hoped. However, the book repays a careful reading and it is a very useful and important contribution to both the academic and the activist alike.

C.J.

BUILDING AN EMPIRE IN AFRICA

German Imperialism in Africa. From the Beginnings until the Second World War. (H. Stoecker (ed). Berlin, 1986.)

This book, as the title suggests, deals with the history of the colonisation of Africa by Germany. It deals with the former German colonies of South West Africa (Namibia), Cameroon, Togo and German East Africa (Tanzania).

The book shows the common interests between Imperial Germany, the German banks and missionaries in the colonisation of Africa. Not only that, there was a certain pattern in this policy:

"The territorial objectives in sub-Saharan Africa formulated in 1940 were not only reminiscent of First World War plans but largely identical with them — a fact which clearly underlines the continuity of German imperialism's policy of colonial expansion.

"During both world wars the colonial war aims focussed on a vast African empire stretching from coast to coast and designed to serve economic and strategic purposes. But this is not to say that ends and means in the Second World War were exactly the same as in the First World War." (p.415)

After the First World War monopoly capitalism in Germany developed into state monopoly capitalism, "a process which was intensified after 1933 under a fascist regime and at a time of heightened rivalries among the imperialist powers." (p.415)

These factors, together with the fact that Germany was defeated in the First World War, influenced the German imperialist policy of colonial expansion in Africa. The increased direct influence of corporations and economic groups such as the Deutscher Bank became noticeable.

We mention this change in the nature of German colonisation of Africa because it shows the connection between capitalism/imperialism and colonialism. It shows the change in methods/motivations but not in aims.

The chapters dealing with the economic expansion and German political aims in South Africa and Morocco give the theme of the book a new and broader dimension. The book destroys racist myths and stereotypes about Africa — myths which were used to justify colonialism in Africa.

This book, a product of years of research on the subject and written by well-known scholars of the German Democratic Republic on Africa, differs from "traditional" writings on colonialism in that it also deals with the wars of resistance of the African people against colonialism.

In the end, however meticulous and thorough bourgeois scholarship can be, one senses there is something amiss. The bourgeois scholars suffer from a grave, though not incurable foreshortened vision problem, a disease encountered often in those who live in libraries. This book does not suffer from that disease.

This book is useful for another reason: it gives the background to and discusses the roots of West German neocolonialism in Africa. But, besides these general remarks, the other value of the book is that it is published at a time when the struggle of the Namibian people against colonialism — the German colony settler community is an important factor in Namibia — is reaching new heights.

The book is of interest to readers of *The African Communist* for, besides being factual and informative, it is partisan, siding with the people of Africa.

Nyawuza

WOMEN'S GRIM STRUGGLE BEHIND PRISON BARS

No Child's Play by Caesarina Kona Makhoere. (The Women's Press, London, 1988).

Many accounts of life in South Africa's prisons have been written by former political prisoners on Robben Island and Pretoria, but there has long been the need for a chronicle of the life of our imprisoned women comrades. This has now been done, revealing a story of unparalleled courage and determination in the face of the vindictiveness, sadism and racism of those in charge of our political prisoners.

Caesarina was arrested when her father, a policeman, led the police to where she was in hiding. She deals with this betrayal compassionately and with understanding. Her father subsequently attended her trial each day and was devastated at the sentence of five years handed down to her — he had never expected that she would even be found guilty. He cried unashamedly in court after the verdict and her mother later told her that he was never the same again. He died a few months after she was sentenced.

From Mamelodi police station she was taken to Compol Building which houses the Pretoria Security Police. It is one of South Africa's notorious torture chambers and from the first day she was threatened with death, beaten, kicked, punched — left with bruises all over her body. From "interrogation" she was taken to Pretoria Central each day, later transferred to Silverton Police Station, kept in strict solitary confinement from October 25, 1986 until May 9, 1987 when she was brought to court. Her sentence of five years commenced on October 27, 1977, effectively making it a six-year sentence.

Dorothy Nyembe and Amina Desai were among the comrades she met at Kroonstad where her real fight began.

Hunger Strike

Racial discrimination operates inside South Africa's prisons as well as outside and extends to differences in food, clothing and sleeping arrangements. Initially food was the prisoners' biggest complaint. It was both inedible and inadequate and their only weapon was not to eat it — to go on hunger strike.

On the eighth day Brigadier du Plessis, responsible for all political prisoners, showed up, asking whether they eat at home what they demand in prison. Caesarina's reply was:

"Yes, definitely. Are your white prisoners, all those hooligans you have here and these hobos eating that type of food outside? Because some of these are hobos . . . you treat them like kings and queens, with all the privileges you can think of. Privileges, just because they are white."

Later that day they were informed that their diet would be changed. The initial victory was short-lived, the food again deteriorated and so from time to time other hunger strikes had to be called.

Caesarina was moved from prison to prison, her fame as the one to start the protests spreading before her.

All prisoners are expected to have their cells tidy, to be dressed and to greet the wardress who opens up with a smile. This became too much for Caesarina and one day she refused to "parade". The others soon followed her example and eventually this breach of regulations was accepted. Then she boycotted the appalling and ill-fitting prison clothing; wearing only the vest — like a T-shirt — and petticoat which converted the whole "ensemble" into a presentable dress. The *doek* and overall were discarded. Then she decided she had done enough prison work and refused to continue. From March, 1979, until her release she never worked.

Caesarina and those with her were charged for refusing to wear prison uniform and refusing to re-enter their cells. At this internal court the magistrate and prosecutor were both from the Prisons Department. The women demanded their own lawyer and Caesarina was eventually given a lawyer from Mamelodi — on condition she wore her prison uniform. This was one of her only compromises — she was prepared to compromise if this would yield an advantage. As she said, she could always change her tactics and go naked!

She was sentenced to 60 days spare diet. Certainly no joke when the daily food ration consists of porridge twice a day and so-called "soup" for lunch.

One wardress she calls Mbomvana was a particularly vicious sadist and decided to teach Caesarina a lesson. She enlisted the help of her boy friend and another warder and all three of them barged into the bathroom where Caesarina was taking her bath, pulled her out of the bath and smashed into her naked body. And so Caesarina and Thandisa vowed revenge. Thandisa was among those who gave her strength when times were hard and who also "fought an inimitable war in the dungeons of the hellish racists".

Thandisa had a set of mathematical instruments which had not been removed when their studies were stopped. One day this wardress tried to lock them up with no exercise. After demanding her exercise, Caesarina slapped her. Thandisa also went for her and together they stabbed her with the compass and dividers, assaulting her on the face, the head, the body, all over. All their pent up anger was unleashed and they were quite prepared to kill her and hang for it. After they had satisfied themselves they went back to their cells, leaving the bleeding Mbomvana to stagger down the passage.

This time the case went to the South African Police. Although Caesarina afterwards got the beating of her life from Mbomvana and her male helpers, she and Thandisa had achieved their object — a trial outside the prison in a court of law where all their complaints could be made public.

From her first day in prison, for the whole six years she was inside, Caesarina remained in single cells, never being in a cell with other comrades. Helen Suzman M.P. was stunned when she visited the women to hear what they had to tell her. Caesarina had been in segregation for two years, without visits, without reading material, without anything except subsequently the bible.

Caesarina sums up: "We learned some lessons in their prisons . . . We learned that we could win against them. Even with nothing: even with only our hands and our comradeship and our determination, we could defeat them . . ."

And again: "There is one thing I have learned about this system of the South African government. When you talk soft, they don't listen to you, whatever you say. Until you take action, action in the true sense of the word, where people are fighting physically, not verbally. It is only then that they believe that we mean business. You must hit them hard."

B.S.

STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN LESOTHO

Prophets With Honour: A documentary history of Lekholtla la Bafo, by Robert Edgar (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 250pp. UK Price £8.95 pb.)

The history of Lekhotla la Bafo (Council of Commoners) throws a fascinating light not only on the development of the national liberation movement in Lesotho but also on that of South Africa, with which it was closely connected throughout its existence. Lekhotla la Bafo was born in 1919 when its founder Josiel Lefela, a member of the Basutoland National Council, felt that a second chamber on the lines of the British House of Commons was necessary to voice the aspirations and grievances of the common people. The National Council, dominated by collaborationist chiefs, was unrepresentative of the people of Basutoland and little more than an instrument of the Colonial Office. The Basutoland economy was in a state of decline, with a drop in the export price of wool and drought forcing increasing numbers of Basotho to seek employment in South Africa. The traditional way of life of the Basotho people was disappearing, and with it the relationship of trust between the people and their chiefs. Poverty and hardship were widespread.

Josiel Lefela was a man of the people. Born in 1885, he had some years of schooling before working in the South African mines and also as a policeman in Bechuanaland. On his return to Basutoland he carried on a variety of occupations — as manager of an eating house and butchery, peddler of goods in the mountains, traditional doctor, organiser of circumcision schools and farmer of land inherited from his father, finally as secretary and adviser to his local chief, Peete, who delegated him to take his seat on the National Council. In an address to the National Council Josiel Lefela explained his reasons for a second chamber:

> "There are many complaints throughout the nation. There is no mouthpiece to voice the grievances of the people. If the Council of Commons be authorised anybody will be able to voice their complaints to it, and such complaints could be sent to the secretary of the Council of Commons. The reason why there are so many complaints is that we do not meet with our chiefs."

Meeting with no response from the authorities, Josiel and his younger brother Maphutseng together with their supporters formed Lekhotla la Bafo on September 27, 1919. From that time onwards they were a thorn in the side of officialdom, taking up every issue with a persistence that earned them the reputation of being "troublemakers".

At first they tended to look back with nostalgia to the days of the traditional *pitso*, when chiefs were prevented from becoming dictators by the need to achieve consensus. But in the course of time Lekhotla broadened its vision, and came to understand that the plight of the Basotho people was not due solely to the machinations of evil chiefs, traders and missionaries but flowed from the operations of the exploitative system of capitalism and colonialism which held not only the Basotho people but all the world's commoners in thrall.

Communist Party

Attempting to forge links with their fellow commoners in South Africa, Lekhotla found its closest allies, not, as might be expected, in the African National Congress, but in the Communist Party, whose influential press was placed at Lekhotla's disposal and whose leaders regularly visited Basutoland to address Lekhotla meetings, among them Albert Nzula, S.P. Bunting, Jacob Tjelele, J.B. Marks and, of course, Edwin Mofutsanyana, who as editor of *Inkululeko* travelled to Basutoland often and struck up an intimate relationship with the Lefela brothers.

The relationship was fruitful to both parties. The Communist Party gained an understanding not only of the problems of Basutoland but also of the means of organising rural protest which could be turned to account in South Africa; and Lekhotla became an adherent of the world-wide anti-imperialist movement and a friend of the Soviet Union, whose government in later years it sometimes asked to raise issues on its behalf at the United Nations. Robert Edgar comments:

> "Despite the close connections between Lekhotla la Bafo and the South African Communist Party, it is inaccurate to suggest that the latter dominated the former. Although party publications gave Lekhotla la Bafo a militant image by translating its name as the 'League of the Poor' and leftist rhetoric was liberally sprinkled throughout its writings (largely because Maphutseng Lefela had become a party member), there is no question that it remained at heart a nationalist movement centred round a defence of the Basotho nation and culture. Lekhotla la Bafo never felt its independence threatened by the party and kept up a healthy working relationship. Even when the British and Roman Catholic Church exploited this relationship to portray Lekhotla la Bafo as a Communist front group, it never distanced itself from its ally".

Those today who try to make out that the South African Communist Party is trying to "capture" the African National Congress would do well to ponder this lesson.

Robert Edgar, an American scholar who spent some time at Roma, has gathered together in this volume a collection of letters, speeches, petitions and articles by and about Lekhotla la Bafo from 1923 to 1962, constituting an invaluable memorial to a fighting people's organisation which has made its mark in Lesotho history. He has included in the volume 17 songs of Lekhotla la Bafo which he has selected from a songbook compiled by Hlakane Mokhithi and which were translated with the assistance of Maleboheng Mohale, Edwin Mofutsanyana, Nana Mahomo and Motsumi Moja.

One would like to know more about these remarkable songs, full of fight and vigour, anti-establishment, anti-clerical, loyal to Moshoeshoe and Lesotho tradition, political to the last syllable. One stanza reads:

In the plan of the congregation
The missionaries are there
In those nations that have accepted Jesus
The land has been stolen

But the songs are not all bemoaning the fate of the nation. Many contain a call for unity in the struggle.

Stand up you men of Lesotho
And fight for the rights of Lesotho
God help us
Have mercy on us and give us strength.

And one stanza in a song entitled "Sing of the Day of Birth" is exultantly forward-looking:

Sing with joy
Of the spark that sprang
Over the hill
And turns into flame
And burns everywhere
Lesotho and over
In Africa

Who sang these songs, and when? What is their provenance? They deserved a few paragraphs of explanation.

Robert Edgar has encapsulated an important and fascinating segment of Lesotho and South African history in this slim volume and deserves our thanks for his labours. He could, though, have included a map to guide us around the country. Not everybody knows where Mapoteng is (birthplace of Lekhotla in the district of Teyateyaneng).

Z.N.

FILM REVIEW: Cry Freedom

Sir Richard Attenborough's latest film, *Cry Freedom,* was released last November. This was exactly a decade after one of its subjects, Steve Biko, was murdered in cold blood by his captors after he had been chained, naked and bleeding, to travel hundreds of miles in the back of a police van to Pretoria, the spiritual crucible of racism.

The film strives to portray Biko's relationship with Donald Woods, the tensions and friendship between an articulate and brave black consciousness leader and a liberal and privileged white newspaper editor.

The film opens with the crackle of the teletype machine; the black lettering on the grainy field of white could have been symbolic of the tension prevailing in South African townships — in the whole of the country — during the mid-1970's. Then there are still shots depicting the police indulging in an occupation they are most comfortable with: brutalising black people, men, women and children. There are certain chilling shots of the terror in the uncomprehending eyes of young ones as bulldozers proceed to render squatter camps into rubble, people fleeing helter-skelter.

There is something entirely uncompromising and angry about the film which could have been informed by Attenborough's perception of the realities of apartheid. John Briley's screenplay has, despite itself, a praiseworthy adherence to truth, a preoccupation with detail which is also the director's hallmark. Those who saw *Gandhi* and its horrifying grandeur can attest to this.

But films about real people, living or dead, have their own limitations. Someone once observed that a funeral, finally, says nothing about the deceased. Funerals mostly try to recreate in the mourners' collective mind broken images and vignettes that belonged to the unspeaking body in the casket. But, at the end of it all, when the preacher has intoned, "Ashes to ashes . . ." most people return and wash their hands in the undying ritual of ablution wondering whether the person they knew was the one in the box.

Poetic Licence

This disjointedness, when it comes to film, is due to the fact that there is no way that a true representation of the life and death of a human being, hero or coward, can be encapsulated within ninety minutes of whirring celluloid. And the most handy stratagem is to resort to poetic licence. Briley's script is replete with such instances. While the role of film is not so much to suspend disbelief as to render dreams and nightmares seductive, there is something jarring about the cliches of heroism attributed to Biko. In the view of this reviewer, it was entirely irresponsible for that sequence in the stadium where Biko, a banned person, goes on delivering a rehashed medley of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, *using a microphone!*

The director of the film admits that this isn't a true documentary; that he was using Biko as a pivotal character while Woods was the principal in the film. Perhaps this is where a lot of things got derailed. There are these interminably long sequences of Woods preparing to leave the country. We are given extremely sympathetic glimpses into how his family was affected by the father's concern over Biko. He even goes to see Jimmy Kruger, then Minister of Justice, to intercede on Steve Biko's behalf. There is the rivetting episode of the T-shirt impregnated with acid which was sent to Woods' little girl. This is truly horrifying. It probably made a lot of people at the Leicester square cinema misty-eyed; perhaps they saw that the regime in South Africa is not only racist but it grinds into fine dust anything that stands in its way, black or white. But the truth is that many people wondered what was the big deal about a family that had a *choice* when it came to leaving South Africa. Most people know of many people, black and white, who left — and still leave — that country in the greatest hurry, some being carried across fences because they've sustained bullet wounds. The overall impression, then, was that although Woods was to be praised and lionised in western capitals, his flight into Wogan had nothing to do with the smell of burning flesh inside South Africa.

There is something that always stammers beneath the sub-text in a film. In *Cry Freedom*, there is a memorable scene of Sophie Mgcina not being told by the family that they are leaving; in a word they leave her holding the dog. But she listens to their cadence as they fail to meet her eye as they prepare. Something, a shadow, passed across Mgcina's face and it spoke of all those sons and daughters who left the country to fight for liberation and who didn't leave dogs behind but mothers and fathers and loved ones whose eyes just stare and stare.

There are Nkosinathi and Samora, Steve's sons, whose grief, together with Ntsiki's, leap across the silver screen to drench the paying audience. It is then that people sigh and shake their heads and there is this sniffing in the auditorium.

Genocide

For many people the impact of *Cry Freedom* was that it brought to their doorsteps the horrors of apartheid, a system that is spawned and supported by their governments. They began to realise that South Africa is a regime engaged in a genocidal war against its opponents, at home and abroad. Some might have remembered Hitler or Pol Pot and cursed the representatives their parents vote into power.

The film's strength is also in its sound track which was put together by George Fenton and Jonas Gwangwa. When this music plays, after a most haunting "Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika", the credits roll down and, at the end of it all, the names of people who died in detention drop as if from a great height. One unaccountably remembers broken lines from T.S. Eliot:

> "*What grows from this stony rubbish*
> *Tell me, son of man?*"

and the answer stares out of eyes of a people engaged in struggle.

M. Langa

to be
or
not to be

LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON PEOPLE'S WAR

From Kev

Dear Editor,
It is abundantly clear to all South African revolutionaries that we have reached a crossroads in our struggle. To employ incorrect tactics at this point (no matter how correct our strategy is), to ignore the objective conditions necessary for escalating people's war and to not seize the "opportune moment" would negate the effectiveness of the struggle to date. On the other hand, if we implement correct tactics with due regard to the objective conditions on the ground we would be in a position to seize the "opportune moment" and achieve the fundamental objective — the seizure of political power.

Of primary importance is the correct theoretical formulation of tactics to be employed under present conditions — the form and content of these tactics are crucial if politico-military activity is to be escalated in any one particular area. Undoubtedly, experience has demonstrated that with present revolutionary upsurges the liberation movement headed by the ANC has achieved a status and a prominence which is unprecedented. Furthermore, the amazing display of the SACP's flag and slogans at mass rallies and political funerals reflects the dialectical unity of the revolutionary alliance between the ANC and the SACP and the determination of the masses to support this dynamic unity practically. To further enhance the strategic importance of this it is necesary for the ANC to enhance its vanguard position in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Boer regime.

In order to give meaning to the ANC's vanguard position (and of fundamental importance here is its ability to not only direct and determine the internal political struggle but to be the striking combat force which leads the people in conducting revolutionary violence) it has to consider two primary factors: ideological work and the creation of underground networks.

The relationship between ideological work and underground networks

It is in the arena of ideological confrontation that the ANC and its allies face the greatest challenge. The detractors of the ANC (the ultra-left, Boer ideologues and the world imperialist alliance) are all engaged in trying to disprove the correctness of the ANC's theoretical positions and discredit the moral superiority of its politico-military activity; they either call it petty-bourgeois reformism or leftwing terrorism. The exploited and oppressed people of South Africa need, more than ever before, correct ideological leadership to lead them effectively in struggle — politically and militarily. This will also ensure a commitment to the revolutionary process which would withstand the onslaught directed at the revolutionary forces from within and without.

It is also important for all genuine revolutionaries to understand that correct ideological positions are a necessity because they give content and significance to the notion of the working class leadership of the struggle for liberation and secondly, it enables us to correctly interpret the relationship between race and class in South Africa. It is precisely because of the absence of correct ideological leadership that the ultra left despise the revolutionary role of the working class and its leadership position and also why they do not see the achievement of the national democratic revolution as the main content of the struggle at present (hence the call for socialism now). If, as committed revolutionaries, we accept that the main social force in the revolution is the working class which above all others must exert its influence in both the political and military fields, then not only must we win the masses to this position but we must also ensure the leading role of the working class in the liberation movement and the people's army Umkhonto We Sizwe. This task can only be achieved through ideological work.

The only way in which ideological work can be conducted effectively internally is through the creation of efficient, highly professional underground networks which have deep roots within the oppressed and exploited communities. These clandestine networks have demonstrated their capacity to determine the pace and success with which many programmes and campaigns of the ANC are fulfilled. The future of the people's army, MK, and the very existence of the organised revolutionary masses under the leadership of the ANC depend on our ability to create these networks and to strengthen existing ones. Additionally, if these clandestine networks are steeled in revolutionary theory and practice, they will perform the vital function of defending the gains of the revolution against counter-revolution in the post-liberation period. The material conditions exist for the creation of these clandestine networks — already the rudimentary organs of popular power are emerging; in many areas open mass political activity devoid of armed struggle is saturated and the willingness of the masses to confront the enemy physically is always present. The move from armed propaganda (although not abandoning it) to military operations on a bigger more sophisticated scale has to be considered a real possibility at this point — from ungovernability to people's power.

If the ANC (and by implication its allies) maintain that the most effective way of dislodging the Boer regime is through the armed struggle (Strategy and Tactics — Morogoro 1969), then the ANC and its allies are necessarily committed to a highly organised political and military assault on all the institutions and manifestations of the apartheid state. Obviously South African revolutionaries will develop and use 'indigenous' forms of struggle but will of necessity draw upon the experiences of the world revolutionary process to assist in formulating political programmes and conducting revolutionary warfare in South Africa.

The Armed Seizure of Power

If in a purely theoretical sense we have reached an equilibrium (whereby the enemy does not have the ability to overcome the political and military initiative of the people under the leadership of the ANC and vice versa), then it is necessary to consider why the ANC and its allies are unable to irreversibly change the balance of forces and destroy the apartheid regime in its totality.

Part of the answer has to be in the military preparedness of the ANC. It is in the realm of people's war that the decisive battles will be fought, but they will only be decisive if, and only if, the entire oppressed and exploited peoples are involved in organised clandestine military confrontation with the enemy (directed in the main against enemy personnel). It is clear from all indicators that the foremost task facing the revolutionary movement at present is the escalation of people's war, but before we can begin to address that question we have to consider the prerequisite for escalating people's war — the arming of the masses.

The term 'arming the masses' is often confusing and misunderstood. Far from meaning a responsibility on the part of the ANC to arm every progressive in the country with an AK-47, it means initiating a process whereby it becomes possible to engage every patriot in assisting either directly or indirectly the armed struggle. For this process to unfold there must be instilled in the masses a willingness to establish an infrastructure between the clandestine networks and the command structures both externally and internally. The lifeblood of this process has to be the trained cadres working in completely clandestine conditions, the advance guard and striking force of the people, cadres with the highest degree of revolutionary commitment and ideological disposition.

Translating Correct Ideological Positions into Practice

It would be exceptionally difficult to undermine the theoretical formulations and revolutionary perspectives of the ANC and its allies. Historically the liberation movement has been consistent in developing correct political positions which reflect the objective and subjective conditions at any point in time. At the same time it is also important to engage in constructive evaluation of the practical manifestations of these correct political perspectives — often what happens on the ground is not a true reflection of the theoretical intention. All revolutionaries genuinely interested in the true liberation of our country will accept that although we have achieved magnificent feats in the arena of political struggle, the development of the armed struggle has lagged behind. An important reflection of this imbalance is the situation which has developed in the black and progressive white communities within the country — on the one hand we have a dynamic situation in the African townships where the people have under exceptionally difficult conditions created a situation of ungovernability (albeit in periodic cycles). Already in many areas organs of popular power called for by the ANC are operating (even if on an extremely limited scale due to repression). On the other hand we have not witnessed the emergence of these rudimentary organs of popular power in the Indian, Coloured and white areas and political activity has been severely affected by the state of emergency and MK activity has been limited. There is no lack of political activists in these areas and it is absolutely essential that they are recruited into the underground networks of the ANC and combat groups of the people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe. If this is not undertaken then they will find themselves increasingly isolated from the masses.

Worldwide there is great focus on the concept of a negotiated settlement to the South African conflict. The ANC and its allies have never discounted the concept but have categorically rejected the idea under present conditions. As Joe Slovo, the general secretary of the SACP, pointed out, a political settlement or solution cannot be elevated to a fetish. Objectively the situation demands increasing the level of politico-military offensives in order to force a genuine transfer of power to the people.

Bridging the Gap

The main consideration in the coming period has to be two-fold, that is how to develop new forms of political struggle to overcome the repressive legislation of the Boer regime and to effectively develop the combat readiness of the masses and the military preparedness of the people's army.

The revolutionary forces headed by the ANC are well placed and equipped to sustain an ongoing political offensive, but the strategic initiative should be a highly organised, efficient and striking military offensive against the racist regime. It is absolutely necessary to re-evaluate our military operations — their timeousness, political significance, the nature of our targets and most importantly their ability to influence the balance of forces.

In all of this it should never be forgotten or ignored even for a moment that it is the political objectives of the ANC and its allies which determine and direct the armed struggle, in this instance our political objectives coincide with the imperative need to escalate our armed offensive employing new and creative methods of revolutionary warfare.

The ANC and the revolutionary forces in general need to instil greater revolutionary discipline, revolutionary morality, political consciousness and complete confidence in the revolutionary vanguard. Of vital importance in this regard is strict adherence to the principles of revolutionary democracy.

In order to achieve this crucial task it is vital to develop from amongst the mass democratic movement an internal leadership which is not only responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the ANC's political initiatives but can organise and lead the clandestine military objectives of the armed political struggle.

It is only when these objectives are met that the revolutionary forces headed by the ANC can carry out the more strategic objective of people's war — the destruction of the apartheid state in its entirety.

Let us once more give real meaning to our rallying call — forward to the armed seizure of political power!

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE SOVIET UNION?

From Sindie, Zambia

Dear Comrade Editor,

I am not a Communist, but having travelled and seen how people in the Soviet Union, Cuba etc live, I tend to love their way of living and how they relate to people. I appreciate the reforms that are being done in the Soviet Union but at the same time they leave me in a mist of confusion.

We appreciate the stand of comrade Mikhail Gorbachev. Comrade Editor what confuses me is this:

When reading newspapers, listening to radio and watching TV, we hear that comrade Gorbachev is criticising everyone who built the Soviet Union to what it is today. It is further said that comrade Brezhnev's heroic deeds during the World War II have been, to a certain extent, exaggerated. Knowing the Soviet history we just become confused. Comrade editor — before we can be confused more, we are requesting that a way should be shown to us, so that we don't become the victims of Western propaganda.

Comrade Editor — also we appreciate the fact that the two Super Powers had to meet and discuss the Angolan situation with the parties concerned. It is a step forward in solving this 13-year-old war which has claimed so many lives in Angola.

We are comrade Editor requesting that the Party should guide us in such sensitive issues.

BANTUSTAN POLICY IS A FAILURE

From M.M.A., Bophuthatswana

Dear Editor,
Recent developments in our country have shown that it is no longer a question of "organisation" but of power struggle between the oppressed masses and the oppressor regime. The people in our country are portraying their disapproval of all apartheid structures at all levels established by the oppressor government.

People in independent and self-governing homelands have started to show their grave disapproval of neo-colonialism. Homeland founders are toppled on grounds of corruption and fraud, but still replaced by others who are for the system instead of declaring their government null and void.

Transkei was overthrown twice and more recently was followed by Bophuthatswana. This is an embarrassment to homeland leaders and their Pretoria masters after so deceiving themselves for a period that the people are happy with the divide-and-rule homeland style. They were sure the struggle for freedom has been crushed.

The clampdown on extra-parliamentary organisations was an endeavour to pave the way for the October municipal elections and the drive to revive the rejected statutory council. Buthelezi's Inkatha was left unaffected by clamps and with no limitations. Many wonder if he is happy with being singled out as sellout number one and a collaborator. Let the enemy in our country be kept fully occupied with trouble so as to deny it the chance to raid its neighbours.

How can the enemy create turmoil in its neighbouring countries and thereafter offer itself as mediator? By its stubbornness it refuses to listen to its Western allies to give clemency to victims of apartheid who are to hang after lengthy periods of torture and many months on death row.

Mahlangu of kwaNdebele has been crying for the presidential post but the people of that area denied him that chance by fighting all the moves leading to sham independence. He recently praised his masters in Pretoria after smashing the Mmabatha coup. Mangope seconded him, praising his masters for killing some security officers.

Let us make all apartheid structures fail — Botha's traditional method is first to attempt to silence the people and then to come up with dummy structures. Dummy structures are creatures of white apartheid parliament Acts. Some of our people are misled and participate in them, not seeing the danger of these structures being dissolved by these structures by the same parliament — the parliament in which they have no seat and no say — should it so desire.

Uphold the alliance of the SACP and the ANC!

Work hand in hand with MK!

TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO COMMUNISM

From Brian Christie, Glasgow

Dear Editor,

I have always felt there is a natural affinity between the cause of Ireland and the struggling masses in South Africa, and indeed the worldwide people's struggle against imperialism.

Reading *The African Communist* and studying the SACP analysis of national liberation is like a breath of fresh air after speaking, listening and arguing with socialists who, without doubt, have succumbed to the distortions and anti-national liberation rhetoric of the ultra-left and Trotskyist left.

I wholeheartedly agree with the SACP that the socialist revolution for the world's oppressed peoples and nations is impossible without first going through the revolutionary stage of national liberation. There is nothing deviant or bourgeois about this stage of the revolution if the working class play a leading or commanding role, for them the transition to socialism and communism is only made easier.

The transition from capitalism to socialism and communism is part of the social evolution of humanity and any process which helps to bring this new age that bit closer must be given support. History has proved and is proving that national liberation is such a process.

PRAISE FROM A READER

From A.Y. Coleman, Ghana

Dear Editor,

I have read *The African Communist* and am very much interested in it because of the way it explains the situation particularly in Southern Africa. I realise that your publication explains matters differently from what we read in other publications. Furthermore it adds to my understanding of the Marxist-Leninist approach to world problems. My compliments and thanks to all of you.

DOCUMENTS

JOINT MEETING OF SOUTH AFRICAN AND SOVIET COMMUNISTS

On April 27 a meeting took place between a delegation of the South African Communist Party, led by General Secretary Joe Slovo, and E.K. Ligachev (member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee) and A.F. Dobrynin (Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee). Also present was A. Yu. Urnov, Deputy Head of the International Department of the CPSU, Central Committee. The following résumé of the meeting was issued:

Joe Slovo described the courageous struggle of the SACP — the oldest Marxist-Leninist Party on the African continent. After its banning by the South African racist authorities in 1950, the SACP has had to act in the deep underground and is subjected to the most severe terror and repression. Being an active participant in the militant alliance of the forces of national liberation, led by the African National Congress, the Communist Party, underlined Joe Slovo, also maintains its independent role as a political vanguard of the working class of the country, expressing its socialist aspirations.

It was noted in the course of the discussion that, as a result of the powerful thrust of the liberation movement, the apartheid regime in South Africa is in the throes of a deep and irrevocable crisis. Under these conditions it is necessary for the Pretoria regime to understand that the attempts to save apartheid are doomed and to agree to a political solution to the problem, accepting the just demand of the ANC and other patriotic forces to transform South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial state. Such a solution, the SACP and CPSU are convinced, would be in the interests of all those who live in South Africa — black and white alike. It would contribute to peace in the country and in the region, and to the improvement of the international situation as a whole.

However, facts show that South Africa's rulers refuse to listen to the voice of reason and have embarked upon the war path against their own people, and against the neighbouring independent states. Their policy finds support from the imperialist circles of the US as well as other Western states. In the situation which has emerged, Joe Slovo said, the antiracist forces are determined to step up the liberation struggle in all its forms.

The General Secretary of the SACP expressed heartfelt thanks to the CPSU and the Soviet people for diversified assistance and support to South African patriots. It was stated by the Soviet side that solidarity with the struggle for South African freedom remains unchanged.

The participants in the meeting called for the fullest internationalisation of the movement against apartheid, for the total condemnation and rejection of this criminal system all over the world. They called for the intensification of the international campaign to save "the Sharpeville six", for the liberation of Nelson Mandela, and all other political prisoners in South Africa.

The CPSU representatives informed the SACP delegation about the process of perestroika in the Soviet Union, its achievements, problems and the difficulties of this deeply revolutionary process, aimed at the qualitative renewal of all sides of life in Soviet society. An important milestone will be the XIX All-Union Party Conference, which will pay attention to the problems of restructuring the economy, political system, and social and cultural spheres on the basis of full use of Socialism's creative potential.

The SACP delegates noted the favourable effect of social transformations in the Soviet Union on the situation in the world. They expressed full support for the efforts of the CPSU and the Soviet government to prevent nuclear disaster, to create a comprehensive system of international security, to ensure a just political solution to regional conflicts. On behalf of South African communists, Joe Slovo welcomed the signing of the Geneva Agreements on the settlement of the situation around Afghanistan.

The representatives of the CPSU and SACP affirmed the great significance of the Meeting of the representatives of parties and movements in Moscow in November 1987.

They expressed solidarity with the people of Namibia fighting for their independence under SWAPO leadership, and with Angola and other African frontline states, defending their sovereignty threatened by South Africa's aggressive actions.

The participants in the meeting, which passed in an atmosphere of friendship and full understanding, reaffirmed the mutual desire to further strengthen fraternal relations between the CPSU and SACP.

LISTEN TO

RADIO FREEDOM

Voice of the African National Congress and Umkhonto We Sizwe, The People's Army

Radio Lusaka

Shortwave 31mb, 9505 KHz	7.00 p.m. Daily 10.15-10.45 p.m. Wednesday 9.30-10.00 p.m. Thursday 10.15-10.45 p.m. Friday
Shortwave 25mb, 11880 KHz	8.00-8.45 a.m. Sunday

Radio Luanda

Shortwave 31mb, 9535 KHz and 25mb	7.30 p.m. Monday-Saturday 8.30 p.m. Sunday

Radio Madagascar

Shortwave 49mb, 6135 KHz	7.00-9.00 p.m. Monday-Saturday 7.00-8.00 Sunday

Radio Ethiopia

Shortwave 31mb, 9595 KHz	9.30-10.00 p.m. Daily

Radio Tanzania

Shortwave 31mb 9750 KHz	8.15 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday 6.15 a.m. Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

The above are South African times